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SCENES
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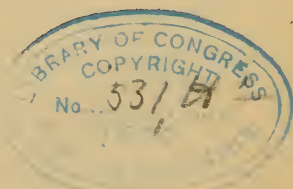
AND DESIGNED ESPECIALLY FOR
SABBATH SCHOOLS.

BY
REV. G. A. NIXDORFF, A. M.,

PASTOR OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, OF
GEORGETOWN, D. C.

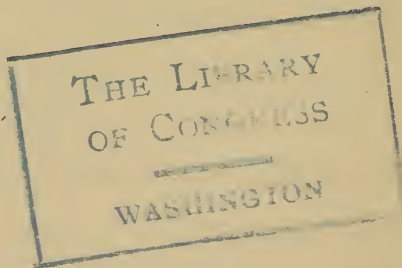
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FROM THE PRESS
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PREFACE.

TO THE CHILDREN of the Sabbath-schools, this little volume is affectionately dedicated, with the very beautiful and encouraging words of the Divine Master: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

DEAR CHILDREN :—I made a promise, at the earnest solicitation of one of our Church agents, years ago, that I would write a book for the children of the Sabbath-school. I have not felt well satisfied in not having redeemed this promise; for, you know, we should try to fulfill all our engagements. I am not young any more, and life is uncertain; and I have therefore thought that one of the very best things I could do, would be, by the grace of God, to redeem, as soon as possible, this promise. I am aware, too, that it is not an easy thing to write a

book for children. One of the greatest, if not the greatest, difficulty with me has been to choose a subject which would be interesting and profitable to you. After having considered this part well, I find that I have fixed upon the subject that was first brought to my mind, and that is—"Scenes or Incidents in the Life of our Saviour."

I would also state, that when I had first thought of writing for you on this interesting subject, some older heads made a very bad prophecy about you, and said to this effect : " Oh yes, it is a very good subject ; but then, the children of the Sunday-schools nowadays don't want to read any book that is really and truly religious. They want story-books, and would much rather read about ' Robinson Crusoe,' than about anything the Lord Jesus has said or done." I told these people that I thought they were mistaken ; that I had a better opinion of you, and thought that a book of this kind could be written in such a way, that you would want to read it, and be pleased with it.

Having this good opinion of you, and having

had considerable experience in the Sabbath-school, I now, in the fear of God, undertake to write for you.

I would state, however, that this little volume does not by any means profess or undertake to give an account of all the wonderful doings of Christ, as written by the Evangelists. That would make a large volume, and defeat the object. We have taken the liberty to choose such incidents as could be made, according to our judgment, most interesting and profitable to children. It does not, either, profess to give these incidents in the order of time and place, as they occurred; but they have been selected, and in one or two instances, several of the same kind are thrown together (or grouped) under one general head: i. e. "Raising of the dead," where we have "The Son of the Widow of Nain," "Jairus' Daughter," and "Lazarus" taken together.

The book, as all will understand, is intended for children, and arranged and written accordingly; and yet we at the same time trust that it may be read with profit by older persons also.

Before you begin to read this book, however, I want you to pray this little prayer, which I have here written :

O God, our Heavenly Father ! help me by Thy good Spirit to read and understand this book. It tells me about Jesus, my Saviour, and His wonderful doings. Grant, blessed Jesus, to open my young heart to receive its truths, and may I be enabled to turn from sin and all evil, and seek to love, obey and follow Thee through life ; and after this short life shall have ended—as it must—receive me into Thy heavenly kingdom, to unite in serving Thee forever. Amen.

I would herewith acknowledge my obligations to my esteemed friend, Mr. John L. Ried, of Georgetown, D. C., for having kindly transcribed the manuscript for me, and having thus aided greatly in preparing the work for the press.

G. A. N.



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SCENES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.—*Matt. ii; Luke ii. 1-20.*

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Luke ii. 11. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."*

CHRISTMAS has come at last. Oh! how long and earnestly we have waited for it, counting months, weeks and days. The nearer it has come the more anxious we have been, until at last we felt that we could scarcely wait any longer. Now your anxiety, I fear—for I was a child too—arises too much from the pleasant time you expect to have, the presents you expect to receive, and the nice things to eat, etc.

Well, we are pleased to see you happy, and enjoy yourselves; for Christ came into the world to make people happy forever, by saving them from sin. Whilst, however, you enjoy yourselves and have so many good and nice things, you should remember about the birth of the dear Saviour, and how He came into the world and became a little helpless child, born in great poverty, that He might take upon Himself our nature, live here, and teach us, and then die to save us. Think how poor and helpless He was, as has been beautifully written :

“ On the long-expected morn
He was in a stable born;
Where the horned oxen fed,
The straw and manger were his bed.”

You know, children, that shepherds were out at night, keeping watch over their flocks, when it was made known that Christ was born. A light shone round about them, and although Christ had been expected, they were very much

frightened, or as is said in the Scripture "sore afraid." They did not know what the light meant—may perhaps have thought, at first, that it was a judgment, or something bad about to come upon them: but, you remember, the angel soon told them they should not fear, for said he, "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." He told them how they would find the child and his mother, etc. There was also a star seen by the "wise men" in the east, that went before them until it came and stood over the place where Jesus lay. Some one has written very beautifully about it, after this manner:

"Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid;
Star of the east, the horizon adorning,
Guide where the infant Redeemer is laid."

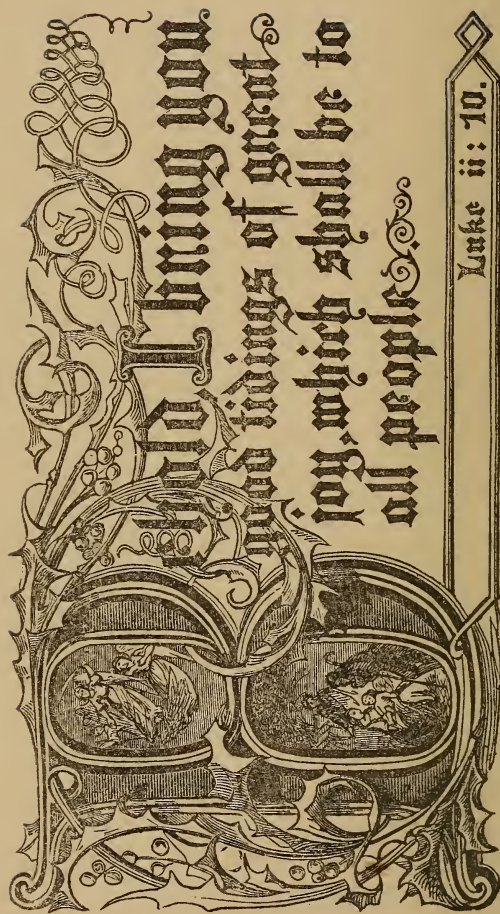
You know how they came and found Jesus

and His mother, as they had been told; and how glad they were when they had found Him, and how they opened their treasures, and gave Him "gold, frankincense and myrrh;" you remember, too, how Herod, a wicked king who lived at that time, sought to kill Jesus; and how His parents, "being warned of God in a dream," fled into Egypt, taking the young child with them, and thus saved His life.

Now we may learn from this, dear children, that Christ the Saviour has come into the world, and therefore we may be saved. You see too how glad we should be, like the "wise men" when they saw the star, and found Jesus—so too, we should seek after Jesus by prayer, and reading and hearing of Him; and we too should be glad when we find Him, that is, when we believe in Him and feel our sins forgiven. If we love Jesus as these "wise men" seem to have done, we also will seek to do something for Him; give money—gold, if we

have any—to tell other people in heathenish darkness and who worship idols, about Christ, this loving Saviour. We should also remember that Christ and His Church still have their enemies, who are opposed to Him and are seeking to hinder His kingdom. We should shun the society of wicked people, and pray that God would convert them unto Himself.

O, Saviour! Thy kingdom cannot be destroyed: grant to send out missionaries; and may all people soon hear of Thee, and know that Thou hast come into the world, and art willing and able to save.



Bring you
most things of great
joy, which shall be to
all people.

Luke ii: 10.



CHAPTER II.

THE LOST CHILD; OR, JESUS IN THE TEMPLE
WITH THE DOCTORS.—*Luke ii. 42-52.*

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Luke ii. 52. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."*

A CHILD lost! What an excitement the cry makes in any city, village, or section of country. The people leave their homes, and go forth cheerfully, with one accord, in search of the missing one. Every lane, nook and corner is carefully examined; the forest is searched, and if the dear one is not found, as a last resort the waters are dragged for the body. Now Jesus, at the age of twelve years, had gone up to Jerusalem with His parents to attend one of the great feasts, that of the Passover, celebrated in remembrance of the night in Egypt, in which the destroying angel passed

over the homes of ancient Israel, because, at the command of God, these houses had been marked with blood.

The parents of Jesus had spent a number of days at Jerusalem, attending this great feast, and had gone a day's journey from the city before they missed Jesus. The reason why they did not miss Him earlier may have been that there were sometimes a number of families together, who may also have had children; and knowing Jesus to be a loving and dutiful child, they may not have made themselves uneasy about Him. At the end of the first day's journey, perhaps as they were about going to rest, or to partake of a frugal evening meal, they missed their son. Now, as you may well think, they felt very sad, when all at once they found that Jesus was not with them. They asked just as other parents would have done who love a child; and after having searched for him among their "kinsfolk and acquaint-

ance" in vain, they then started back towards Jerusalem, as was very natural for them to do, and found Him, at length, at Jerusalem, in the temple with the doctors, "hearing and asking them questions."

It must certainly have surprised His parents very much, to find their little son thus engaged. Most children, if lost, would be found perhaps on the street, looking at the many pretty things to be seen; but Jesus was "in the temple." Now it seems to me they must have thought "well, He is in a good place, at any rate;" but then the idea of one so young sitting in the midst of aged, learned men, with perhaps their grey beards, must have struck them as very strange. When asked why He acted as He had done, He, we suppose, gives them to know for the first time something of His character, and replies: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business." He was more than a child, and He realized it.

This justifies His conduct to His parents in remaining. He was really far above His parents, the Lord of heaven and earth.

Now, children, we see from this how Jesus increased in knowledge, as He grew in years; and this should urge you to learn too, especially about God, and salvation, and this Saviour who was once a little child. For this purpose, to help you to learn of Christ, and to increase in this knowledge, have I written this book. You can learn much whilst young, and what you now learn well, will not soon be forgotten; and instead of spending all your spare time in play, for children should play sometimes, try to read good books, especially your Bible; and instead of being in the company of the ignorant and wicked, try to be in the society of good and wise people, remembering that God's word says that "a companion of wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." If you want to know

anything about your lesson that you do not understand, ask your kind teachers politely, and they will try to answer your questions. Any one may, however, ask very hard questions, which it is almost impossible to answer ; and, when this is the case, you must be satisfied with your teacher, or friend, doing the best for you they can. "Secret things belong unto God," and there is much that we will never know certainly in this world : strive to be wise and good.

We too are in danger of being lost forever, for we have gone away from God and have sinned against him.

God, our heavenly Father, like unto these parents of Jesus, comes after us, and seeks us by His good Spirit, and by the prayers and kind words of our Sabbath-school teachers, pastors, or other pious friends. As Jesus immediately obeyed His parents, and went back with them, and was "subject unto them at Nazareth," so

too should we in our young days, before we have gone off as far as many older persons have done in sin, seek to return unto our Heavenly Father, by repenting of sin, and believing in Christ our Saviour, through whom alone we can be pardoned and become children of God.





CHAPTER III.

CHRIST'S TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS.—*Matthew*

iv. 1-11. *Mark* i. 12, 13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Hebrews* ii. 18. “*For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.*”

A WILDERNESS, children, is, as you know, a wild place, where few if any people live; large trees, bushes and rocks all serve to give it a very wild look. I have traveled through such dreary places, especially when I was preaching in West Virginia. Now, I suppose many of you would be afraid to go into such a place alone; and if you knew that you would probably meet a wild man, or a savage beast, you would be still more afraid.

God's ways are wonderful. Here you see almost immediately after the baptism of Christ

He is "led up of the Spirit" into such a place, to meet Satan and be tempted.

I have not, as you see, given you a chapter on the Saviour's baptism, although it was a great and important event, as I did not think that you would perhaps understand it as well, or be as much interested in it, as in some other things. It will be enough for me to state that Jesus came to Jordan, and desired John to baptize Him; and that John, knowing His exalted character, was slow at first to do it; but that after Jesus gave His reason—"for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness"—John then did as Christ desired him.

You know, too, how that, after His baptism, "the heavens were opened," and the Spirit of God descended upon Him, and "a voice from heaven" said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

I have only to tell you here that baptism is an ordinance of God, and that we should all

be baptized in the name of the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Ghost; but that, unless we repent of sin, and really believe in Jesus, baptism will not save us. It would seem that almost immediately after the baptism of Christ, He was “led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.” Now, God, it is said, tempts no man; but He did so direct as to have His Son, our Saviour, go where He would be tempted. He knew that He could and would overcome the tempter, and that it was necessary that He should be tempted, that He might feel for us in our many and strong temptations. How cunning, powerful and persevering Satan is in his temptations! You see how he suited the temptations to Christ’s situation, and how strongly he sought to excite His ambition.

He knew that Christ had been fasting and was hungry; he knew that it was right to eat; and, therefore, he asks first that the Saviour

should show His power in commanding "that these stones be made bread;" but Christ answered him from the Scriptures, "It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." As though He had said, God can keep me alive without bread. He doubtless knew, too, that if He was hungry, and went to the door of some kind people, they would give Him something to eat; and that, therefore, it was not necessary that He should change the stones into bread to please Satan.

He then tried another temptation, by taking Him into Jerusalem (here called the "holy city") and setting Him on the high part of the temple (called here "pinnacle") and requesting Him to cast Himself down, as there was a promise in the Scriptures that He should not be hurt, because the angels would watch over Him. The Saviour told him that it was also written that we were not to tempt God. That

is, that we are not to place ourselves in danger when it is not necessary. The devil having failed in his two temptations, tries a third or last one.

He then takes Jesus up "into an exceeding high mountain, and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;" and says, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Then the Saviour told him to leave, and said: "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Now, my young friends, you know that Satan still lives, and will come after us, too, and seek to lead us to do wrong. You see, too, how cunning and persevering he is. He knows how to suit the temptation to our situation, or rather, as he does not, like God, know all things, he judges from his past dealing with people, what will be likely to please them; and if he fails with one temptation, as was the case

with the Saviour, he tries another, and tries like a general to find our weak point. One he tempts to steal; another to get angry, and say bad words; another to be proud, etc. He tempts little children, too, and begins very early. This is one reason why you sometimes find it hard to do good. He tempts you to disobey your parents; to get angry with each other; to want what you should not have; to be proud of your pretty clothes, and think that you, perhaps, are better than other children, because you have finer and more costly clothes than they. He tempts you to stay away from Sabbath-school and from church; he tempts you to talk and be mischievous when there, not listening to what your kind teacher says, and making your dear superintendent trouble. Satan is ever busy, and we must watch him: we may always know that when we desire to do wrong, Satan, or our own wicked hearts, or both together, are

tempting us. He is a deceiver, and makes great promises—what he will do for us, and how pleasant it will be to sin—but as soon as we have done wrong, guilt and pain follow. He promised our first parents in Eden much; and deceived, and made them miserable. He promised Christ the world; but he never had a world to give, because the world does not belong to him, but to God who made it. As Christ brought up Scripture to resist him, so should you; and you therefore see, too, how important it is that you commit to memory, or get it as we sometimes say “by heart.” If we do this, and look to God in prayer, when we are tempted to do wrong, God can and will preserve and deliver us, and Satan, that wicked and miserable spirit, will go away from us, and we shall feel so happy that we obeyed God, and would not listen to his lies.



CHAPTER IV.

CHRIST'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT:—*Matthew v.-vii.*

GOLDEN TEXT.—*John vii. 46, "Never man spake like this man."*

WE have here, children, an instance of Christ preaching. They had then no Christian churches as we have, but the Saviour sometimes went into the Jewish places of worship and took part in their services. In this instance, however, He prefers the open air for it may be that scarcely any house would have been large enough for the people.

The expression here used, "and seeing the multitudes He went up into a mountain," seems to mean that Christ selected the mount on account of the large number of people who were anxious to hear Him, and desired, doubtless, that all might have this opportunity. "Into

the mount," away from the noise and bustle of the city, where, under His own heavens and shaded by the trees which He as God had caused to grow, they might hear His words and be taught in heavenly things without being disturbed. We should feel thankful that at this day we have good, convenient and comfortable churches in which to worship God; and yet if we did not have them, or were compelled to give them up, as some have been in times of persecution, we could just as well worship God in the open air. The number of persons who wanted to hear Jesus on this occasion must have been quite large. Here, "on the mount," they could all be accommodated. The Saviour, we suppose, sat above them, and so they could all hear.

I have stated that He sat, as the sacred record informs us. Now this would seem strange to many of us who are not used to see the minister sit when preaching; but it was the

custom for the Jewish teachers to sit when instructing the people, and therefore I do not suppose that they thought strange of that.

It is here said "He opened His mouth and taught them," that is, began to preach or teach them. Now, I think I can imagine the scene. All the people are quietly seated around and below Christ, on a beautiful day; the shade of the trees protects from the heat of the sun; all is silent, and nothing heard, perhaps, but the occasional sweet notes of some little bird; the people are in breathless silence to hear this great Teacher. He begins by calling several classes of persons "blessed," whom a wicked world would never esteem thus. "The poor in spirit" are first called "blessed." By these the Saviour means the humble. He next says that those "who mourn" are "blessed," "for they shall be comforted." He refers chiefly, we suppose, to those who mourn on account of sin. God Himself will comfort all such. He next styles

“the meek,” gentle, loving souls, “blessed”—this class of people stand opposed to the proud and ambitious. The Saviour says, “they shall inherit the earth.” He next says those are “blessed” who “hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Now hunger and thirst are two of our most urgent wants. If you have not been hungry, and God has blessed you with good and kind parents, you should feel thankful; for many little boys and girls in the large cities almost starve. Perhaps you have been thirsty, and you feel, Oh! what would I not give for a drink of water! especially if you have been sick and had some fever. Now the Saviour calls those “blessed” who desire to be good as earnestly as hungry and thirsty people do bread and water. The soul that once sees its lost and perishing condition, craves forgiveness and salvation as much as the hungry and thirsty do bread and water. The Saviour next calls the “merciful” “blessed;”

that is, persons who have tender and forgiving hearts, and who can feel for the sorrows of others. Some children,—and grown people too,—are very unmerciful to each other, and especially to dumb brutes, who can not speak and tell their troubles. It always shows me that the person or child that can do so, has a very hard and wicked heart. Jesus next tells us that “the pure in heart” are “blessed,” “for they shall see God.” Our hearts are naturally impure, and have many sinful thoughts and desires, but they must be made “pure” by God’s Word and Spirit if we would “see God.” Now children, all our outward works and doings will not help, unless our hearts are made “pure.” It will be a great thing to see God. All will see the Saviour when He comes again, and at the judgment day ; but to “see” Him here means to live with Him in heaven. Christ then calls “the peacemakers” “blessed,” for, says He, “they shall be called the children of

God." Now my young friends, you may begin early to be "peacemakers;" for when you know that two of your little companions or playmates have had some difficulty, you can go kindly to them, and by speaking gently to them seek to bring them together again. This is one of the many ways in which we can do good in the world, and the Saviour here says that such "shall be called the children of God." One more class of persons is called "blessed" by the Saviour, and they are such as are persecuted for righteousness' sake. This world is so wicked that if we seek to do right in all things, reprove sin, and do our duty, wicked people will hate us and persecute us. That is, they will say, perhaps, bad things about us, laugh at us, and seek to injure us. Christ and His Apostles and the first Christians were very much persecuted, and many of the early Christians put to death for their love to the Saviour. Now Jesus says "for theirs is the kingdom of

heaven." He then, in this connection, calls those "blessed" around Him who should thus suffer, and intends all who shall be persecuted for this cause. Christ, when He preached at this time, did not choose a particular text, and dwell on that, but, as you see, He instructs or teaches the people about many duties. He next styles His disciples "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." As salt purifies and saves from putrefaction, so Christians are represented as purifying, and to some extent saving the world.

Thus you remember that the Lord would have spared Sodom, if only ten righteous persons had been found in it. Christians are also to be "the light of the world." The world is in darkness, and needs light; Christians, by their example and influence, are to point to Christ, show what His religion has done for them, and thus, by pointing out the way to heaven, be "the light of the world."

The Saviour next teaches the duty of forgiveness; then, that all sin, no matter though it should be dear and profitable unto us, as a right eye or hand, must be given up, if we would be saved.

He then proceeds to caution persons against swearing, and says, "let your communications be yea, yea, nay, nay." The Quaker Friends and others understand this to be directed against swearing of all kinds; and, therefore, only affirm in courts.

Our Divine Teacher next instructs us in regard to prayer and alms-giving, and teaches us that these things must not be done for show or vain glory, or to attract attention, and then in the Lord's prayer gives us an example of how we should pray. He teaches us next that we are to strive mainly after heavenly things, and "lay up our treasure" *there*, and tells us that we "cannot serve two masters;" but that as His people, we should have a firm

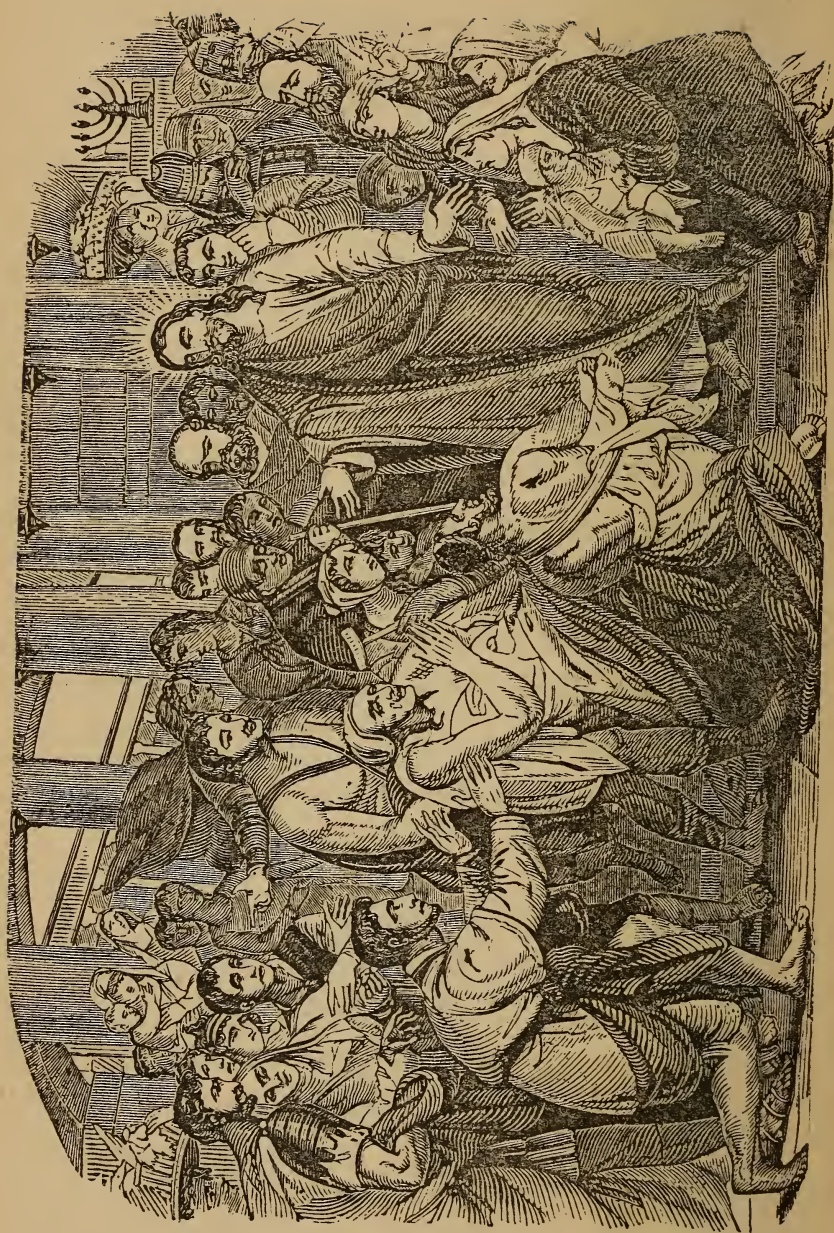
trust in His providential care, and encourages this from two illustrations taken from the natural world. The first is, "the fowls of the air," how God takes care of them; and the second is, "the lilies of the field," and says, in reference to them, that "*even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*" The conclusion is, that if God takes care of these lower and frail things, He will also take care of us if we put our trust in Him.

He next warns us against harsh and rash judgments in regard to our fellow men; warns us against "casting our pearls before swine;" encourages us again to prayer, from the manner in which parents hear and usually grant the requests of their children; warns us against "false prophets," and tells us that "by their fruits," or lives, we shall know them.

In conclusion, He illustrates His whole sermon by two builders, and says that those who hear His sayings, and do them, "shall be

likened unto a wise man that built his house upon a rock ; and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock." Such as will not obey, he likened unto "a foolish man who built his house upon the sand ; and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." Obedience to Christ's teachings is the foundation of rock. Have we, my young friends, built on this foundation ? *If so, it will stand.*







CHAPTER V.

CHRIST CLEANSES THE LEPER AND HEALS THE
SICK.—*Matthew viii. 1-17.*

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Matthew iv. 24: "And He healed them."*

SICKNESS, suffering, and death, have entered our world, as you know, by sin. It was a sad hour, when our first parents disobeyed God their Maker, and listened to the voice of the tempter. I have little doubt that my young friends have often thought with me, in seeing so much sickness and death around us in the world, "Oh! that man had never sinned." But our wishes do not generally change things, and sickness and death go on. Now, when Jesus came into our world it was then as now full of sickness and suffering. There are, too, as you know, a great many kinds of ailments among people. All these forms of sickness were,

however, subject to Christ. He had only to speak, and diseases fled at His Word. I suppose you think it must have been very good for the people of that time to have had such a person as Jesus with them. So it was, and we may sometimes wish in our sickness and affliction that Jesus could still in person be with us. He was just such a Friend and Helper as the people needed; of a tender and sympathizing heart, joined with power and willingness to relieve. Now sometimes persons may be willing to help, but they may not be able; and they may on the other hand be able, but not willing; but Christ was both able and willing. It is said at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, about which you have read, that "when He was come down from the mountain great multitudes followed Him." This seems as though they must have been much interested in His preaching, and many perhaps thought that they should hear more, or see this great Teacher do some wonderful works.

Well, it would seem that He had scarcely more than come down from teaching the people, when a poor afflicted person met Him, and asked Him most humbly and earnestly to cure him. This man is called "a leper." This may be a strange name to some of my young friends, as we have not this disease in our country. It is a most fearful disease, which was and is still in Eastern countries. It began commonly on the face about the nose and eyes, showing itself at first in little pimples or spots. These increased in size, and gradually spread over the whole body. It was not a sickness that ended in death directly, but went on growing worse and worse, until even the bones and marrow were reached by it, and in its last stage the joints of the body would be separated, and the body fall into pieces. A person with this sickness might live, it is said, twenty, thirty, or even for fifty years; but I suppose the time of suffering with many of them was

much shorter than this. No mere human power could cure this disease; and although they might linger a long time, yet death was their certain doom. This sickness was, it is supposed, regarded as contagious, and therefore they were separated from other people, and they had to satisfy the priest, in olden times, that they were certainly healed, before they were allowed to go among the people again. Notice how humbly this poor man comes to Jesus, and yet with such full faith in the power of Christ to cleanse Him. It is stated here that he "worshipped" Jesus and said, "Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean."

Now my young friends, we are sinners, and sin is a worse sickness than even the leprosy; for unless we are cleansed from it, our bodies and souls must perish forever. None can deliver or save but Jesus, who shed His blood on the cross for us; and if we would be saved we too must come humbly and in faith to Him.

This sickness became worse and worse every day, week and month. So too the longer we stay away from Christ, our Saviour, the greater is our sin, guilt and danger. We should seek to come early to this loving Redeemer, before our hearts are hardened. I have no doubt you have seen some very wicked old people. I attended the funeral of an old man, who died at the table whilst eating, and it was said that the last word he uttered was an oath. How fearful to live and die in sin, when you have such a kind and almighty Saviour!

The language of our hearts should be :

“I'll go to Jesus, though my sin
Hath like a mountain rose ;
I know His courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.”

We have an account next of the Saviour entering into Capernaum, and healing “the centurion's servant.”

Capernaum was a town on the western

coast of the Sea of Tiberias, and was a place in which Jesus did many wonderful works ; and because they repented not after having seen and heard so much, Jesus threatened them with some of His heaviest judgments. This centurion, however, unlike many others of this town, believed in the power of Christ. He was an officer in the Roman army, and, as his name means, had a hundred soldiers under him. He not only showed that he had faith in Jesus, but was a kind-hearted man, for he felt for his sick servant, and came to Christ desiring that He should heal him. The Saviour proposed to come to his house, and heal his servant ; but this man had so much faith in the power of Christ, and such a sense of his unworthiness, that he told Him it was not necessary that He should come, but that He should only "speak the word," and his servant would be cured. He reasoned, too, very beautifully from his own situation or position

as an officer. He said he was a man under authority, and had soldiers under him, "and I say to this man, go, and he goeth; and to another, come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it." Now he meant to say to Jesus, you have just as much and far greater power over sickness. You can just stand here, and "speak the word," "and my servant shall be healed." The Saviour said he was a man of great faith, and that He had not found so great faith "in Israel"—that is, among His own, or the Jewish people. This man's servant was healed, as you know, and that without Christ going to his house.

Now if we would be saved ourselves, or desire that Jesus should deliver our friends from sin and save them, we must come unto Him in faith, and in prayer, as this man did. If your friends were sick, you would desire very much to have a doctor, and long to see

them well. How much more should you feel concerned about them, when you know that they are living in sin, and that unless they repent they will lose their precious souls. My young friends, you have only one refuge for yourselves and others; go to Jesus in prayer, and ask him to convert and save them; and oh! how glad you will be when you see them rejoicing in Christ as their Redeemer.





CHAPTER VI.

THE CONVERSATION OF CHRIST WITH NICOD-
DEMUS.—*John* iii.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*John* iii. 7: “*Ye must be born again.*”

THE sun had set, and the mantle of darkness covered the earth, when rather a remarkable and interesting person visited Jesus. The Divine Master was not only engaged during the busy hours of the day, but also during the silent hours of the night. This man occupied quite a high place among the Jewish people, being a member of the great council of the nation. Various reasons have been given for his coming to Christ by night. Some have supposed that as the Divine Master was so much engaged during the day, this man thought that the night would afford him the best opportunity to have a calm,

personal talk with the Lord Jesus Christ: others, that as Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, he was, perhaps, so much engaged himself during the day, as scarcely to be able to find time for this conversation; others still have supposed, and I think, perhaps, most correctly, that it was through fear of the Jews—because, you know, they hated and opposed Christ and His cause. It was also considered a sufficient reason for persecution on their part, if any one showed a disposition to become a disciple of Christ. As the danger was so great, I have little doubt that this man came at first somewhat timidly to the Saviour. You should feel very thankful to God, my young friends, that you live in another age and land. Here there is not only no law against Christianity, but the laws protect you, and great exertions are put forth in the Sabbath-school and elsewhere to bring you to Christ. Oh! how different it is with us, to what it was with Nicodemus.

This man, as soon as he came to Jesus, began to speak very well of Him, and said, as you may remember: "Rabbi (or master), we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him." The Saviour immediately brought to his attention the great doctrine of His kingdom, as though he had said, You are convinced that I am a teacher from God, and I will now teach you at once the great doctrine of My kingdom; and said unto him: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." This man was quite astonished at the doctrine of Jesus, and did not understand it at all, and asked a strange question about it. The Saviour told him again most positively that this change must take place in us, if we would be saved. He tried to explain to him that as we came into the world with sinful natures, through

the fall of our First Parents, this change was necessary to fit us for heaven. The Saviour told him further that this was a mysterious change, such as we cannot fully understand, saying, "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the spirit." Nicodemus did not still understand Jesus, and he then said unto Him in language somewhat reproving, "Art Thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" Now, my young friends, many well-educated people, and some that have attended preaching and Sabbath-school for years, seem to know little and care less about this great doctrine ; and yet Jesus teaches that unless we are thus changed, we cannot enter heaven.

This change consists of two parts—repentance of sin and faith in Christ. We can never be truly said to "be born again," or the second

time, until through repentance we are led to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Redeemer. The moment however we do thus believe, whether we know it or not, is the time in which we are born again. This too is the time when we begin really to love and serve God. Now, whether we do know the precise time or not, is not a matter of great importance, but the thing itself we should know. We know that there has been a strong wind passing over the country when we see large trees torn up by the roots; and so too when we find our hearts are changed, sinful habits broken up, and find that we now really love God and delight in His ways, we may know that a great change has taken place in our hearts. The blind man of whom we read could not tell much about the way in which his eyes were opened; but one thing he did know, that whereas he had been blind, now he saw. We have reason to believe too, that some are con-

verted or thus changed very young; and you should not therefore wait until you become grown in order to become Christians.

From what we read afterwards about this man Nicodemus, we learn that he became a warm friend of Jesus: see John vii. 49-53; also, John xix. 39; and we think that his conversation with Christ must have done him much good. I sincerely hope that none of you who read this little book will rest satisfied until you know that by true repentance and humble faith in Jesus as your Saviour, you have been born again into His kingdom, and then, as we shall see in another chapter, if we really have thus become Christians ourselves, we will go earnestly to work and seek to bring others to this Saviour who has become so precious unto our own souls.



CHAPTER VII.

CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH THE WOMAN OF
SAMARIA.—*John* iv. 1-30.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*John* ix. 4, "*I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.*"

WE have in this chapter another instance of the busy life of Jesus. He was here traveling from one part of the Holy Land to another, or from the southern great division called Judea. He was journeying northward to Galilee. In going from the southern to the northern division, unless He would go considerably out of His way, by crossing the Jordan and going up on the east side, He was compelled to go through Samaria, the middle great division. He had now got into Samaria, in His journey northward, and reached a

city called Sychar. It was about the sixth hour, or according to our way of counting twelve o'clock in the day, which was also the time for one of the Jewish meals. Jesus being wearied with His journey, for He was true man as well as true God, sat on the well to rest. It may have been a pretty place, shaded and suited for a weary traveler to rest. Whilst seated here, tired and thirsty, "there cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water." Jesus asked her to give Him a drink, both, we suppose, because He really was thirsty, and because He desired to have some conversation with her. We would not be surprised if a weary traveler should ask a drink of any of us, no matter to what nation he might belong. But this poor woman thought it very strange that Christ, being a Jew, should ask such a favor from her, as the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. These Samaritans were a people composed of a few of the ten tribes

and a mixture of foreigners. After the return of the Jews from Babylon, whither they had been carried captives, they set to work to rebuild the temple. The Samaritans wanted to aid them, but as the Jews thought they were not doing it from love to God, they refused their help. This, among other things, made them angry with their Jewish neighbors, and even went so far as to lead them, as we have seen, to have no dealings with each other. This woman may have known that Jesus was a Jew, either from His way of speaking or mode of dress ; at any rate, she seems to have had no difficulty in this respect. Now, notwithstanding Jesus was weary and thirsty, yet so great was His love to the souls of people, that He began directly to seek to teach her the way of salvation. Jesus knew the worth of a soul, for it was to save the souls of men that He came down from heaven to earth. Now see in what a beautiful and natural way

Christ speaks to this poor woman in regard to matters of religion. They were both at the well (Jacob's well, of old and pleasant memories). He had asked a drink of water from this old, deep well, where Jacob, his children and cattle had slaked their thirst. This woman is surprised that Jesus, being a Jew, should ask this favor of her, and the Saviour then begins by saying, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." The woman, not at all understanding Jesus—and unconverted people do not understand spiritual things—told the Saviour that the well was deep, and that He had nothing to draw with. Oh! my young friends, in how great darkness we are by nature! Christ was speaking of giving the water of salvation, and this woman supposed that He meant natural water; but Jesus still went on, saying, "Who-

soever drinketh of this (natural) water (or from the well), shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The poor woman did not yet understand Christ in anything of a spiritual way, but showed her utter ignorance by asking Jesus to give her of this water, that she might be saved trouble and labor, and that she might have no need to come to this well "to draw." The Saviour now drops all figurative language, and by asking her to go and call her husband (for He was omniscient), designed at once to touch her conscience, and bring her sin of adultery to view. She then said He was "a prophet," but sought, as unconverted people frequently do, when pressed strongly to seek the salvation of their souls, to draw the Saviour's attention to something else, and change the subject, saying, "Our

fathers worshiped in this mountain, and ye say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Now many, if not all, of the Jews held this doctrine, but Jesus never preached it, so that it could not be truthfully charged to Him. He then makes Himself known to this woman as the promised Messiah, whom they were expecting, and the Saviour of the world, saying, "I that speak unto thee am *He*." This seems to have excited her very much, and I suppose made her feel glad, so that she "left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come and see a man which told me all things that I ever did. Is not this the Christ?" It is not positively said that this woman became a Christian, but we suppose that she was led to believe in Jesus as her Saviour.

Now, my young friends, the great lesson I desire to impress on your minds, and the minds of all who may read this book, is that

if we love Jesus ourselves, we must all work for Him, in a natural way, as He did, by seeking to bring others to Him. Our time is short; life is uncertain; the souls of men are valuable above everything else. They or we may be taken away suddenly. "Oh! speak a word for Jesus, your dearest friend so true." Do it, too, as Christ did; begin in a pleasant, natural way, with your little playmates, brothers, sisters, or friends. Here God's works, and providence, and the scenes of everyday life, all come to our help; the setting sun, the beautiful pale moon, the stream of water, the funeral procession, the bed of sickness and suffering; in short, all the bright and dark scenes in this world, may be used in leading the mind to Christ; and here, as in every other thing, practice makes perfect, and if you never begin, you will never succeed. I know you would not desire to be saved alone, or "wear a starless crown." Oh! then, begin!

Do it prudently, lovingly, prayerfully, and perseveringly, and God will bless and honor your efforts to win souls to Himself. I have only to add, in the language of that beautiful hymn which we sometimes sing :

“ Work, for the night is coming ;
Work through the morning hours,
Work while the dew is falling,
Work 'mid springing flowers,
Work when the day grows brighter,
Work in the glowing sun :
Work, for the night is coming
When man's work is done.”





CHAPTER VIII.

JESUS CASTETH OUT DEVILS.—*Mark v. 1-19;*

Matthew viii. 28-34.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Luke xi. 20.:* “ *But if I, with the finger of God, cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.*”

THIS is another of the wonderful works which Jesus did when on earth. We read that persons really were possessed of devils, and according to the account given us, especially by Mark, the condition of this poor man for whom Christ did this great kindness must have been distressing in the highest degree. Some learned men have desired to teach us that what is here spoken of as being a possession by an evil spirit, was only a severe form of disease, or derangement of the mind. But these men are very much mis-

taken; for these evil spirits conversed with Jesus, and one of them gave his name, and they also came out at the command of Christ, and in this instance entered into a herd of swine, and caused the swine to destroy themselves. But notice the condition, sad condition, of this man, when he was thus possessed by evil spirits. It is here stated of him that "he had his dwelling among the tombs," and further, that he was "always day and night in the mountains and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones." Now, my young friends, I think you will agree with me, that it would be hard to describe a human being in a worse and more pitiable situation than this poor unfortunate man was. It may be that he did not look much any more like a human being, and I suppose we should all have been frightened if we had met him. It was a mercy that he had withdrawn himself from human society, and seemed to be better satisfied to be

in among the dead. His situation, however, was not only thus lonely and gloomy, but he made the place terrible by his cries and noise. Now graveyards are usually very lonely places and have gloomy associations, but these were made much more so by the presence and cries of this man.

Some persons, and especially the young, are apt to think that religion is calculated to rob them of their joy, and make them gloomy, and unhappy. This is no doubt a snare of the evil spirit, to keep them from the enjoyment of true happiness, which flows only from a sense of pardoned sin. Satan, sin, and guilt, make us really unhappy. See how wretched and miserable this man was, whilst the evil spirits reigned within; living among tombs, and roaming in the mountains, crying and "cutting himself with stones." There are many inward cries of the wicked that are known only to God Himself, and very much of their

misery is known also to man. Thus, if I mistake not, it was Colonel Gardiner, who before his conversion, envied even the happiness of a dog. Then, too, they know not what moment they may be cut down, and go to the world of despair. The Word of God says beautifully of true religion, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace." Strange to tell, also, about this man, that when he saw Jesus, "he ran and worshiped Him." So you see that even devils have to acknowledge Jesus and His right to reign over them. Now we do not, of course, suppose that it was an act of real heartfelt devotion, or had in it anything of love to Jesus, for we see that almost immediately afterward, he used what we would term hard language to the Saviour; for he said, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God?" He feared, as we see, the power of Jesus, and well he might. For

Christ soon cast these evil spirits, speaking in the man, out. Now sin reigning in us, my young friends, still makes us fierce and ugly. We hear much said about lovely and amiable people, who are not Christians, but there is very little reliable in all this without the grace of God. True, some people, not unlike the lower animals, have better tempers and dispositions than others. But the evil of sin in the heart, unless subdued by the power of God, will manifest itself at times in pride, selfishness, anger, ambition, or something of the kind. Thus some of these so-called amiable people are very proud, and as long as they can get everything they want, may seem very amiable, but when they are crossed, and their wishes not gratified, they frequently become very angry. They remind me very much of a well-fed lion lying in his cage. You would scarcely suppose, as you see him lying there, perhaps sleeping peacefully, that there was

anything very savage or terrific about him, but let him be aroused by the presence of flesh when hungry, and you then see the savage beast in all his ferocity. Thus, too, children may sometimes, and frequently, be very loving and friendly towards each other, but let one of them say something or do something that provokes the other, and then the ugly passion of anger shows itself. Sometimes even little brothers and sisters become very angry with each other, and it may be, call each other hard names. All these should remember those beautiful lines on this subject:

“ Birds in their little nests agree,
And 'tis a painful sight
When children of one family
Fall out, and chide, and fight.”

This poor man was, I suppose, a terror to the whole neighborhood, to grown people and children. So, too, people yet become so wicked and sinful by profane swearing, *drunk-*

enness, etc., as to become a terror to all. I suppose there are very few grown people but can remember some such person whom they feared and shunned when children, and I have little doubt that some of you know people of this kind, and I do not wonder that you are afraid of them, for we cannot say what they might do when excited.

I have also seen boys running after drunken men, and crazy people, and making sport of them. Now, my young friends, I need not tell you that all this is not only generally dangerous, but very sinful.

It is said of this man also, that he was unmanageable, he would even break the chains and fetters by which he was bound. So sin and Satan still make children and grown people hard to be managed. They disregard the kind words and entreaties of their friends and parents, and when these friends insist on their doing right, they sometimes become very

angry, and oppose them, and break through all their rules. Now, the right way is for us to become Christians when young, and try to have our hearts, before sin and Satan have become so strong in us, renewed and sanctified by the grace of God. There is, too, one other point to which I desire to call your attention. This man, when once these evil spirits were cast out, became very much changed, as you will see by reading the account. He then loved the Saviour, and wanted to be with Jesus in the ship. So when we love Jesus, we shall desire to be with Him in the Sabbath-school, the prayer-meeting, and the regular public worship of God. Now I heard quite recently of a little girl who was converted, and did not want to leave the Church, and when asked why, she said, "This place I love so much, because here I found Jesus." The Saviour told this man that instead of sitting with Him in the ship (although that would be

very pleasant), he should "go home to his friends, and tell them how great things the Lord had done for" him. So, too, the gentleman and Christian who addressed the little girl to whom I have referred, asked if her father, mother, brothers and sisters loved Jesus, and requested her to bring these dear friends to the Church, where they, too, might hear of the Saviour and His dying love. Now there are too many people who seem as though they just wanted to enjoy religion themselves, and do not have much disposition to go forth and work for Christ; but this, as you know, my young friend, and as I have been endeavoring to show you, is not right. We should feel, and be ready to say :

"I'll tell to all poor sinners round
What a dear Saviour I have found ;
I'll point to Thy atoning blood,
And say, Behold the way to God."

Love to Jesus must be the great prompting power in all our endeavors to work for Him.



CHAPTER IX.

CHRIST STILLETH THE TEMPEST.—*Matthew* viii. 18-27;

Mark iv. 35-41.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Matthew* viii. 27: “*What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?*”

STORMS are sometimes very terrific, and calculated to alarm most persons. However fearful a storm on land may be, a storm on the sea must be much more so, for we have nothing between us and the raging sea but the vessel in which we are sailing.

Jesus, after having healed the centurion's servant, an account of which we have had, left Capernaum, and took a ship or small vessel with His disciples, in the evening, for the purpose of going over to the eastern side. It may have been a calm and beautiful evening, with, perhaps, a clear sunset, and no indica-

tions of a storm. This sea, although only about twenty miles long, and six or eight miles wide, was subject to violent squalls. It is supposed that the vessel here called a ship was a small open boat, such as was commonly used for fishing purposes. Some time during the night, after Jesus had fallen asleep in the hinder part of the ship, perhaps wearied from the labors of the day, there arose a violent storm. The ship, it is said, was "covered with waves," and the lives of all in it seemed in great danger. The disciples became much frightened, and came to the Saviour; and having awakened him out of sleep, said, in all the earnestness of people realizing their danger, "Lord, save us; we perish." The Saviour asked them why they were so "fearful," and having gently reproved them for their want of faith, "arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." The result was, that the men marveled, saying, "What

manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" Now this whole scene, my young friends, as you may well suppose, must have been one of great grandeur. The darkness of the night, the stormy winds, the dashing waves, the creaking, tossing ship, connected with the great alarm of the disciples, and the calm action of the Saviour, and manifestation of His power as God over these stormy elements, all served to make it such.

You may be ready to say, Oh! if Jesus had been with me in the vessel, I should not have been alarmed, no matter how great the danger might have seemed to be, because I know that He has power over the winds and the sea. But stop, and think for a moment. Jesus, your Saviour, lives still, and has as much power, and loves His people just as much as when He was on earth. Well, are you never afraid when the angry winds blow, and thunders roll, and lightnings flash? Why

should you be? Jesus, the Almighty Saviour, lives, and reigns, and can take care of you, and preserve you, just as well as if He were with you in the ship. He is certainly near His people. Ah! but, you say, I have doubts, and then fears. Exactly so; thus, too, it was with these alarmed disciples; they had doubts, and therefore fears. If they had only reasoned for a moment, and sought to exercise their faith in Jesus, as they should have done, they might have said in triumph, We cannot perish, for Christ is with us in the ship, and He need only speak, and the winds and sea will obey Him. It is said that Cæsar could not endure to see his pilot tremble in a furious tempest at sea, because he was in the boat. "How much less reason have we to be afraid," as one has beautifully written, "who carry in our hearts the great emperor of the world."

Jesus, however, knew the weakness of His disciples, their small measure of faith; and in

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His love, He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea. So, too, He still loves most tenderly all who love Him, and are seeking to obey Him. He knows our weakness, our dangers, and also the unbelief of our hearts. Storms, that is, afflictions, temptations, and trials, will come even where Jesus is, for we are informed, "whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth;" but we should not yield to unbelief and fear, but feel that if we love the Saviour sincerely, all is well, and He can protect and deliver us. He has permitted these storms to come down, too, upon His Church, so that sometimes they threaten to destroy everything; and yet He has raised up deliverers in the persons of Luther and those other great reformers, and has delivered His Church and preserved His servants. Thus, too, when we feel guilty, and our sin is pressing hard upon our hearts, and we see nothing but the wrath of God, we should, in the exercise of

prayer and faith, fly to Jesus as our refuge and strength. Remember that we must not neglect to pray, and pray earnestly, as these disciples did, and feel as they did that none but Jesus can help us. If we do thus, this Saviour who still lives, and loves, and cares for us, will come to our help, and the same power that rebuked the "winds and the sea" for the disciples, will calm our fears, and by leading us to trust in Him for pardon and salvation, bring peace and calmness into our troubled hearts. We may say, in the language of that beautiful hymn :

"Courage my soul, for God is near,
What enemy hast thou to fear ?
How canst thou want a sure defence
Whose refuge is omnipotence ?

"Though billows after billows roll
To overwhelm my sinking soul ;
Firm as a rock my soul shall stand
Upheld by God's almighty hand."



CHAPTER X.

JESUS OPENS THE EYES OF THE BLIND, AND CAUSES
THE DEAF AND DUMB TO HEAR AND SPEAK.—

John ix.; Luke xviii. 35-43; Mark ix. 17-29.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."*

THE afflictions referred to in this chapter are, we think, the greatest which human beings can suffer in this life. There may not be, and there generally is not, much if any pain, but they are constant afflictions, cutting us off from so much of the real enjoyment of this world, and making life dark and lonely. If there is a human being that should move our hearts, and gain our sympathy, more than others, it is, we think, the man, woman, or child, who has either been born blind, or

has afterwards been deprived of sight. To such as have been born blind, all has ever been a scene of constant and abiding darkness around them. They have never seen the heavens above, which the Psalmist says, "declare the glory of God," the sun, moon, or stars, or beautiful many-colored clouds. Nor have they seen the earth on which they tread, with its animals, fruits, and flowers. They have never seen the smiling faces of their friends, nor traced the difference in their appearance. I have often asked myself, what are the views and feelings of such a person? Have they any conception at all of things around them as they are? Nor is the situation of one who has been deprived of sight much if any better. I have at times thought that it was even worse; for they know, and can appreciate, the greatness of their loss. They had been accustomed to look out upon the beautiful heavens, and earth, and behold

things created by God in their variety, beauty, and grandeur; but now they have been deprived of this great privilege. So, too, as regards other afflictions, to which reference is made, and of which we have an account in this scripture. The mute, or deaf and dumb person, is also much afflicted, and highly deserving of our sympathy. Christian kindness or charity has, however, done so much for this class of persons, and we have seen them so contented and cheerful, as to take away much of the gloom and affliction of their condition.

It is true, also, that the Christian charity of the present age has done much to lighten the affliction of the blind, by teaching them to read. I have been considerably in the society of educated mutes, and must say, that I have found them cheerful and happy. To bring this affliction, however, home to ourselves, with all the relief that Christianity has afforded, who of us would be willing to exchange situa-

tions with them? So that it remains true that it is even under these favorable circumstances a great affliction.

I need not now tell you that Jesus had a tender and sympathizing heart, and that the suffering condition of the people led Him to exert His power for their deliverance. We read, therefore, that He heard the cries of the blind, and opened their eyes, and unstopped the ears of the deaf, and caused the dumb to speak. Oh! how these afflicted people must have loved Him, and hailed His approach with joy. I hope, my young friends, that you never see persons thus afflicted, but that you pity them. Many of them now, especially the blind, as in time past, live by begging, and it is hard to refuse to give to such persons. You should remember, however, that there is another kind of blindness, and that we are all by nature *spiritually* blind. We do not see God, or His law, or our condition as sinners

before Him as we should, and are in danger of perishing forever. Now a blind person, if he is a Christian, having the light of God's spirit in his heart, may still be happy, for he enjoys the presence and friendship of his Saviour here, and feels that he is going to a world where his eyes shall be forever opened to behold the rich glories of heaven. So, too, the mute may feel that there his ears will be forever opened to hear the beautiful music that shall delight his soul; and his tongue forever unloosed to praise his God. How sad for us to remain in this state of blindness, and when Jesus the Saviour lives and can open our eyes, unstop our ears, and cause our tongues to sing His praises. Oh! how many of these spiritually blind and mutes are there not in the world! They walk on from day to day constantly exposed to the wrath of God, and yet realize not their sin and danger. They live here and enjoy His mercies, and are fed on His rich bounty, and yet do not hear His

voice calling them to repentance and to faith in this Saviour. Nor do they, with their tongues, praise this Saviour, but many, perhaps, profane the name of the blessed Jesus. Oh! my young friends, go to Jesus and ask Him, that by His good spirit He would open your eyes, unstop your ears, and loose your tongues to sing His praise. These people, for whom Jesus did these great things, followed Him; so, too, should you, devoting yourselves body and soul to His service forever, and saying in the language of one of old, "O, Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me." Our language, too, should be after we have been led to this Saviour, and our eyes opened to see His loveliness:

"Oh, that all the blind but knew Him,
And would be advised by me;
Surely they would hasten to Him,
He would cause them all to see."



CHAPTER XI.

THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES AND FISHES.—*Matthew* xiv. 15-21; *Mark* vi. 35-44; *Luke* ix. 12-17; *John* vi. 1-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Matthew* xiv. 16. *But Jesus said unto them, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat."*

THIS kind miracle of our Lord is recorded, as you see, by all the evangelists. A large number of people had followed Jesus into a desert, or lonely place, and had continued with Him until the shades of evening were drawing nigh. Human nature is weak, and subject in this life to many wants. We cannot be very long engaged even in the service of religion, however much we may be interested and delighted, without needing food and rest. The people began to show signs of weariness and hunger, and, as the evening was approaching, the disciples advised the Saviour to send the multitude away, so that they might go into

the neighboring villages, and obtain food. Jesus, however, replied, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat."

When they came to examine how much food they had, they found that no one in the company had anything, but one lad, who had "five barley loaves and two fishes." This quantity of food was amazingly small, with which to begin even, to feed such a large number of people; but Jesus commanded them to sit down upon the grass, orderly, in companies. He then took the five loaves and two fishes, "and looking up to heaven, blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude."

We are informed that "they all did eat and were filled, and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that did eat were about five thousand men, beside women and children." Jesus was too kind and compassionate to send these hungry

people away as the disciples advised, and true religion leads us to care for the bodily wants of people as well as for those higher wants of the soul. It does not speak well for us in matters of religion when we manifest great zeal for the salvation of people, and sending the word of life to the nations in darkness, when we can send the hungry from our doors. Now, there was beautiful harmony in the Saviour's teaching and practice, as there should be in our profession and lives. He taught us to be merciful, and he himself showed mercy, and although He is now no longer with us on earth, he knows all our wants, and feels for us. It must have been a beautiful sight to have seen this multitude of people sitting down on the grass in a quiet and reverent manner. And then to see the Saviour, whose countenance was ever beaming with love, take the five loaves and the fishes, and looking up to heaven, ask the blessing of God upon the food.

Methinks the hungry multitude must have watched Him most eagerly, and have asked themselves, Oh! how can we all be satisfied from this scanty supply? It would not seem as though the miracle was finished at once, as in some other cases; but after the food was blessed, Jesus brake, we are informed, and gave to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. The bread then, as you see, multiplied in the hands of the disciples, so that it not only did not give out, but much remained over after all the people had been fully satisfied. You will see, too, that this miracle required some faith in the disciples, for they might each have said, My share of the five loaves and two fishes will certainly give out before I get around; but we hear of nothing of this kind: they were enabled to go on and feed, and feed, until all were fed.

Now this way of supplying the wants of the people was just as good, and the miracle just

as great, as if Jesus had at once, by the word of His power, converted these few loaves and fish into a large quantity. God, my friends, has His own way of doing things:

“It may not be my way,
It may not be thy way.”

It need not, and will not, in many cases, be our way, for our way is often not the best way.

This miracle teaches us that Jesus our Saviour, sympathizes with us in our weakness, and wants, and can supply all the wants of His people, and of His Church. The Church may sometimes think, Oh! we have so little wherewith to do the work of the Master! and be afraid to go forward in His work. Why if all the means were furnished us at once, there would be no need for the exercise of faith and activity, and, therefore, we must go forward using what the Divine Master has put into our hands, and believing that as the want arises, or increases, so too will the supply. It teaches

us, also, that we should never partake of a meal without first asking the blessing of God upon the food. He deserves this at our hands, and it is equivalent to thanking a friend. God, alone, too, can really make the food we eat do us good. Now how many people there are in the world, and in Christian lands, who never ask the blessing of God upon their food, or thank Him for the much they receive. Such people, my young friends, are more ungrateful than some of the lower animals, for did you never notice how pleased the dog looks at you, and how he wags his tail when you feed him? I think you will all agree with me, that this is very wrong and sinful. This miracle teaches us again that we should not be wasteful, or extravagant. I have seen children who have plenty, wasting bread, when little hungry ones, not far off, would have been so glad for it. This waste is by no means confined to children, or young people, however; for many

grown people are very wasteful and extravagant in their way of living, spending so much on dress, and that which is unnecessary, as tobacco, which not only does not do them any good, but is even injurious. Now we should ever remember that Jesus, after He had fed the multitude, commanded them to gather up the fragments that remained over. Christianity teaches neither to be miserly nor wasteful, but to use all in moderation, to supply our wants, and in all things to seek to glorify God.





CHAPTER XII.

CHRIST RAISETH THE DEAD.—*Luke vii. 11-15; Matthew ix. 18-25; John xi.*

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Matthew xi. 4-5: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them."*

WHAT a wonderful excitement it would cause among the people to learn that some one with whom they had been acquainted, and had been dead, was restored to life. Persons have seemed to be dead, when they were not, as in case of trance or drowning; but if it were known that a friend had been really and truly dead, and that he had been restored to life, the excitement would

become general and intense. Raising the dead must, we suppose, be regarded as the greatest work of Jesus when on earth. This is at once, and entirely beyond the power, we mean the natural unaided power, of man. God has enabled men to do this, as well as other great works, as was the case with Elisha in restoring to life the son of the Shunamitish woman, and Paul, in restoring to life Eutychus. The three instances, to which I called your attention, are somewhat different. The first is that of the widow's son. She and her only son lived in a town called Nain. As the Saviour approached this town, he met a funeral procession coming out of the gate. Funeral processions have nearly always something sad connected with them. We know that some one has lost a dear friend, and that some heart is wounded by the stroke; then, too, our minds naturally inquire in reference to the eternal future of these per-

sons. We are also impressed with the idea that we too are dying creatures, and that sooner or later our bodies must also be carried to the grave. This was, however, in particular a sad funeral. The mother of the dead man was a widow, and this was her only son, the comfort and stay of her life, and now she feels that she is following to the silent tomb her *almost all*, so far as this world is concerned. Oh, how sad she must have felt! and if she had not the comforting power of religion to sustain her, must have felt entirely disconsolate. Jesus, the life-giving Saviour, was, however, near, His heart was moved with compassion for the distressed mother. He touched "the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother." It will be impossible for us to calculate what the joy of this bereaved

mother must have been. Now the many who were following him to the grave can disperse and go to their homes, and the young man could return to his home, still to comfort his dear mother. This, too, must have been the subject of general conversation in the homes and on the street of Nain that night, and perhaps for many days after it occurred.

The second instance to which we call your attention, is that of the daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue. We have a more particular account given us of the illness, death, and restoration to life of this little girl by the Evangelist Mark, in chapter v., 23-43, of his gospel. We there learn, that after the father had come to the Saviour, telling Him of her great illness, and imploring His help, certain others followed, and brought the sad and discouraging news that she was dead, and told the father that as she was dead, he need not trouble the Master. We also learn her age—

she was about twelve years old. Jesus, however, went with the distressed father to his home, and told him not to be afraid, only to believe. When they reached the home, they found people there making a great ado. Jesus told them that the damsel was not dead, but was sleeping. "And they laughed Him to scorn;" but having put them all out, save the mother and father, and Peter, James, and John, He took the little girl by the hand, and told her to arise, and we are informed that "straightway the damsel arose and walked." Now you may well suppose, that the heart of the father of this little girl was made very glad, when he saw her restored to life. He was not sorry that he had gone after Jesus, and brought Him to his house.

The third instance which we notice, is that of raising Lazarus, a dear friend of Jesus. Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary, lived in a quiet little village called Bethany,

about two miles from Jerusalem, on the south-eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. This pious family frequently received the visits of Christ, and He loved them very much. Jesus did not seem to enjoy much the friendship of the rich and great. His own humble, loving spirit, led Him to seek the society of lowly, pious souls. This brother, and these two sisters, not only loved Jesus, but loved each other very much. Since the death of the parents, the affections of the sisters had very closely and tenderly entwined around their dear brother. They doubtless looked up to him, under God, as their supporter and defender. Here in this pretty retired village, they lived contentedly. What a beautiful sight it is, when brothers and sisters love each other, and can live together in peace, especially when all are the friends of Jesus. The Saviour, as we have stated, seems frequently to have visited them, and to have enjoyed

their society very much. You remember, as intimate friends, how Martha complained to Jesus, on one occasion, that Mary did not assist her in getting up a meal, as she thought she should have done. Jesus, however, showing His regard for spiritual things above earthly, said reprovngly to her: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things ; but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Death, the cruel monster, enters everywhere, and none elude his chilling grasp. He enters the residences of the righteous and of the wicked, of the rich, and of the poor. He came also here to this loved family in Bethany, and took from these fond sisters their loving brother. Jesus was not there during his illness and death. They sent word to the Saviour of the illness of His friend, but He did not get there until after the burial, and four days after

his death. He found these sisters in deep distress on account of the death of their brother. Mary told Jesus if He had been there, her brother had not died. He said, "Where have ye laid him?" They say unto Him, "Lord, come and see." "Jesus wept." "It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it." He told them to take away the stone, and then, having looked up to God, the Father, in a short and touching prayer, cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." The dead man immediately obeyed the voice of Christ, and "came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, loose him, and let him go." Who can imagine the joy and gratitude of these sisters to Christ for what He did for them. In this instance of raising the dead, you see, my young friends, most beautifully united the God and man in Jesus. It was necessary that He should be, both; man, to

feel for us, and share our sorrows. "Jesus wept." God, to atone for sin, and do what *man* could not. "Lazarus, come forth." You will notice in this narrative, too, how beautifully Jesus speaks of the death of Lazarus, as if he were only asleep, and so some understood Him at first, and said, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." Jesus spoke thus of his death, because he was a good man, and the Bible speaks thus of the death of the righteous: "They sleep in Jesus, and are blest. How kind those slumbers are." Oh! who would not want to be a Christian in a dying hour? But we should not put the matter off of seeking Jesus, until we are sick or about to die. We do not certainly know that we ever shall be sick, but may be called away very suddenly, as many have been. Moreover, we should seek to be the friends of Jesus, for the peace and comfort which it affords in this life, and so that we may work for Him who has done

so much for us. Like as Lazarus was called from his grave by the voice of the Son of God, so, too, shall we, and all our friends who have died, hear at the resurrection day this voice calling us and them to arise and come forth, either (according to what we have been) to the resurrection of life, or to that of damnation. Oh! that we all might so live, and so die, as to come forth from our graves in the image of our Divine Master, to the resurrection of life!





CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST.—*Matthew xvii. 1-13.*

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Matthew xvii. 2: "And His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light."*

CHILDREN, we now come to a most wonderful and exceedingly grand scene in the life of Jesus. I have always felt somewhat timid when I have undertaken to preach, as I have done a few times, on this very sublime subject. I have always felt, in attempting to speak upon this subject to others, that it was a matter of great depth, sacredness, and grandeur. It has always seemed very much to me like the time when God called to Moses out of the burning bush, and said to him when he was ready to turn aside and see why the burning bush was not consumed: "Draw not hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for

the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." The scene itself seems somewhat like unto the experience of Moses, although far grander, when, after he had been forty days and forty nights with the Lord in the mountain. It is said, you remember, that when he came down out of the mountain from the Lord, that "the skin of his face shone." And it is said that when Aaron and the children of Israel saw this, "they were afraid to come nigh him." You may recollect, too, that in order that the children of Israel might speak with him, Moses put a vail on his face, that the brightness of his countenance might not terrify them.

Moses, too, as you see, was one of the persons who appeared with Jesus at the time of His transfiguration. Moses and Elijah, who had, as you know, passed into the other world many hundreds of years before, came down from their heavenly home, and conversed with Christ on this wonderful occasion.

Jesus had also taken with Him Peter, James, and John. These three disciples were generally with Christ when anything wonderful was to take place. It is said, as regards the appearance of the Saviour, in coming as near to the description as human language can, that "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." You have some idea of the brightness of the sun, and how it dazzles the human eye to attempt to look at this great light which God has placed in the heavens.

You see, too, how much pleased Peter was with the scene, and saith, "Lord, it is good for us to be here," but he was so much pleased as to propose that they should spend some time there, and build "three tabernacles," one for Jesus, "one for Moses, and one for Elias." Now this would undoubtedly have been a scene of terror to wicked, unconverted people, as they always fear anything of this

kind very much; but you see that at this stage at least, Peter must have enjoyed it much. But now, while Peter was speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." This was more than even the disciples could endure, and "they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid." "And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." Now, I suppose, that when this bright cloud overshadowed them, was the time when Moses and Elijah returned again to their heavenly home, for after that, as you learn, "they saw no man, save Jesus only." Oh, what a scene was this, my friends! so great, that in its highest degree of heavenly grandeur, these beloved disciples of Jesus, who first enjoyed it, "fell on their faces, and were

sore afraid." The heavenly voice that came out of the cloud testified at His baptism that Jesus was truly the "Son of God." Now learned men, who have written on this grand subject, tell us that the chief object of this transfiguration, or changed appearance of Christ, for this is what that big word means, was to give those disciples, who were with Jesus at the time in the mountain, the clearest, and most satisfactory evidence, that Christ was really and truly what He professed to be, the Son of God, and thus remove every lingering shadow of doubt, if there were any, from their minds. I do not suppose, however, that this was by any means the only object. I think another object was to strengthen and qualify the Lord Jesus Himself, for His time of suffering and death which was now approaching; to assure Him that God the Father was pleased with His work, and thus, by this heavenly manifestation, and personal sympa-

thy of Moses and Elijah, two most eminent servants of God, to fortify the mind of Jesus for His severe agony in the garden, and on the cross. We must never forget that Christ had two natures—the one human, the other divine—and that it was necessary that these two natures should be united in Him to make Him a perfect Redeemer. Now His human nature, sins excepted, was very much like unto our own. It hungered and thirsted, became weary, and needed rest, etc. It also, undoubtedly, too, as was seen in the garden, shrank back from suffering and dreaded pain, therefore prayed the Saviour, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Now this scene of heavenly grandeur must have tended greatly to prepare and strengthen Jesus for His time of suffering, and was, we suppose, so intended.

The Evangelist Luke, tells us expressly, in relating this scene in chapter ix. 31, that Moses

and Elijah spake with Jesus "of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." This world, my young friends, is a scene of lights and shadows, of brightness and darkness, of joy and sorrow, of prosperity and adversity, and there is nothing abiding. The life, even of the most eminent Christian, has in it generally darkness and sorrow, as well as brightness and joy. I do not suppose that it would be best for us always to be in scenes of joy and brightness, resembling the transfiguration, lest we should become vain and forget God. You may remember, that even after Paul had been "caught up into the third heavens," and came down again to earth, it was necessary for him to have the "thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him." So, too, we cannot expect our highest and greatest enjoyment in religion always to last in this world. I suppose if you really love the Lord Jesus as you should, you have some-

times felt, during preaching, or in Sabbath-school, with Peter, "Lord it is good for us to be here," and perhaps you felt, too, with Peter, like remaining, but you could not; the hours of the Sabbath were passing around, and, perhaps, the Master called you to see a sick friend, or engage in some other necessary work for Him.

We are informed in God's Word, however, that at the resurrection, our bodies will be fashioned like unto the glorious body of Jesus Himself. We shall all then see Him, too, in glorious majesty, "for every eye shall see Him," and those who have loved and served Him here, will be permitted to dwell with Him, and Moses, and Elijah, and all the other servants of God, not only for a short time in glory, as on the mount of transfiguration, but forever and ever. *Who would not be a disciple of Christ with such glory in view?*



CHAPTER XIV.

CHRIST BLESSES LITTLE CHILDREN.—*Matthew* xix. 13-15;
Mark x. 13-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*”

THE love of Jesus, as you know, extended to all classes and ages of persons. He was Himself once a little child, in all its weakness and helplessness, and it did seem very wonderful to the Jews, that Christ should thus take upon Himself our nature in its weakest and most helpless form, but so He did. I suppose He did this that we might see the depth of His humiliation, and that He might, in His human nature, be fully united to us in all our weakness, sin only excepted. If this had not been so, some one in after days might

have said, O, yes! but Jesus never was a little child. The parents, of whom we have read, whether Christians or not, themselves, certainly had some faith in Christ, and had also a desire that their little ones might receive His blessing. They had, doubtless, heard how He opened the eyes of the blind, caused the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk; how, by His word, He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, and raised the dead; and now they felt, if He would only bless their children, it would do them much good. It may be, that their ideas of a blessing did not rise much above worldly good. This is not for us to say, but, surely, in any sense, we must think well of their action. It is here said, "that He might put His hands on them and pray." The disciples were not pleased with the action of these parents, and even went so far as to reprove them. It seems to me, that their idea was: the people are imposing

on the Master: they not only bring their sick, or come after Him on this account; the blind, the lame, and the lepers, not only throng Him, and cry out after Him; persons desire, not only that even their dead be turned to life; but now these weak parents, as though the Master had not enough to do otherwise, and of a more urgent character, come after Him with their little children. This is too bad, for it seems as though the Master was to have no rest. They may also have thought these little ones can understand nothing of His teaching, and what good can it do. It may be, too, that they had no children of their own, and could not, therefore, understand the feelings of these fond parents.

The Evangelist Mark informs us, that when Jesus saw the conduct of these disciples, "*He was much displeased,*" and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."

He also added, "Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Mark also tells us, that Jesus "took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." Now you see, my young friends, how differently Jesus viewed the conduct of these parents, to that taken by the disciples. The disciples may have intended it all for good, and have done what they did out of pure love to the Saviour, but still it was wrong. Jesus came to bless the world, and do it good, and He came especially to bless those who feel that they need and desire His blessing. He seemed to understand fully, and at once, the actions and desire of these parents. He knew that their children were born in sin, that is, with hearts inclined, through the fall, to evil. He knew that they were in a world of sin, and would be surrounded by evil and danger on all sides. He realized, too, far more

than the parents of these children, how much good His blessing might do them, in all time to come. He honored, too, the faith and affection of these parents, which prompted them to bring their little ones to Him. Now I do not wonder that Jesus did just as He did, and called the children to Himself. He might, too, have said to these erring disciples, I am come into the world to bless and draw humanity to myself, and now, when parents desire to bring their children, you will not permit them. Now there are a good many parents in the world, who are not serving God themselves, or doing much good, who seem still to have some desire that their children should do better, and consequently they send them to the Sabbath-school, that they may there hear of Jesus, and be instructed by their teachers in the matters of religion. All this is right, and good, and commendable in itself. There are, however, some parents so wicked,

that they would rather hinder, than bring their little ones to the Sabbath-school, or to Jesus. This, you know, is very wicked, and if this book should fall into the hands of any such child, I would say, pray earnestly to God, that He would change the hearts of your parents, and cause them to love Jesus. He can and will hear your prayers just as well and readily as those of grown people, if you pray as you should. You, children, should seek to come unto Jesus in your young days, and although you have no parents to bring you, hearken to the kind words of your teachers, and seek to come to Jesus, and obtain, by repentance and faith, His blessing. It may be, too, that this book will fall into the hands of some children, whose kind parents God has taken to the heavenly world, and, therefore, they are not here to bring you to Jesus. But, surely, my young friends, if you feel that your dear parents, or even one of those parents, is

in the paradise of God above, you should desire to go there, too. Oh, how important it is, that you come to Jesus whilst young! that is, that by faith, you love Him, and seek to serve Him. Some persons may think that you are too young to become Christians, and understand about Jesus. You know that you have done wrong, and if you feel truly sorry for the wrong, or sin, and will, by simple faith, look unto Jesus as your Saviour, you may, and will have a sense of pardon, and that is what is required of all of us. You know that Jesus, in explaining this, said, in John iii., "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Now you know, or should know, that Christ here referred to something that the Israelites experienced in the wilderness. Owing to their disobedience, God sent amongst this people, as

a punishment, fiery, flying serpents, whose bite was very poisonous. Many people died and they became alarmed, confessed their sin, and begged Moses to go to God, and pray unto Him, that He would take the serpents from them. This Moses did, and the Lord provided a strange remedy for them, "and said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." The poor, bitten, suffering person, might be very ill, and ready to die; but, if from any part of the camp he could only look at this brazen serpent, he was cured, and cured, I suppose, immediately. But remember he must look at it, if he would live, and the very look showed his faith in God's appointment.

So, too, we are sinners, and in danger of perishing eternally. God has provided a Saviour, but, in order to be pardoned and saved, we must, by faith, look unto Him. One simple, single act of real faith in Jesus is sufficient to save the soul, and bring us pardon of all our sins. How important that you should come whilst young, and your hearts are yet tender to the Saviour. You now are free too from care, your parents see that you have food, and clothing, and even education, and you have not much to trouble you. Remember, God's Word says of religion, or piety: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace." If you begin thus early, and strive to be faithful, your piety will increase, and strengthen with your years, and at last your peace shall flow as a river. It may be, too, that you have pious parents or friends, who are very anxious that you should become Christians, and pray much for you. Your

kind teachers in the Sabbath-school, too, desire this earnestly. Remember, too, how early little Samuel became pious, and how God blessed him, and that it is said of Timothy, Paul's beloved young friend, that "from a child, he had known the Scriptures." Remember, too, from how much evil you will be saved by becoming pious when young. "It saves us from a thousand snares, to mind religion young."





CHAPTER XV.

THE CALLING OF ZACCHÆUS.—*Luke xix. 1-10.*

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Luke xix. 10; "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."*

WHAT a stir there is in ancient Jericho! How the people move to and fro in a hurried manner, whilst an expression of great curiosity is seen in their faces. What can it all mean? Oh, they say that Jesus of Nazareth is approaching the city! See, now, the vast crowd that is thronging its streets as Christ enters! Among the excited mass of persons, all eager to see Jesus, there is one man whose anxiety is most marked and earnest. He is a small man, but outruns all the rest. As you watch him, you see him not only going ahead of the crowd, but climbing

up into a tree, a sycamore tree. He has determined to take this way to be sure of seeing Jesus as He passes by. He has now climbed up into the tree, and is seated among its branches and leaves, and doubtless thinks, here I will have a good chance of seeing Him, without being noticed. How often, however, we are disappointed in our calculations, and how strange are the ways of God. The very person who does attract the notice of Jesus, the Omniscient Saviour, is this little man in the tree. Jesus calls to him, and tells him to come down, for He says, "to-day I must abide at thy house." Zacchæus "made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully." The people murmured at this, and said, "that He was gone to be guest with a man who is a sinner." He belonged to a class of men who were by no means popular. He was chief among the publicans, or tax-gatherers. These collectors of taxes have never been very popu-

lar, either in ancient, or in modern times. Doubtless, some of them were unjust and oppressive, then, as now, and yet we can all see that there must be such a class of persons. This man was also "rich," and we see from this narrative, that where the heart is right, wealth will not prevent us from receiving Christ as our Saviour, and from becoming His followers, although few of such seem to obey His call, and come. Why it was that Jesus noticed particularly this man, and called him, and spoke to him as He did, we may not, in all respects, know. One thing I think, however, we must regard as certain, that Christ, by His omniscient eye, saw something in this man, that He did not find in the rest. Zacchæus may, at first, have only gone with the crowd out of curiosity. It may be, that the first feelings of penitence that he had, were when he first saw Jesus. The countenance and humble manner of Christ may have con-

vinced him that Jesus was what He professed to be, the Saviour of the world. I cannot, for a moment, suppose that Christ would have so noticed and selected this man, had it not been that He saw that he, by penitence, was prepared, more than the rest, to receive Him. Here, my young friends, you see a great truth, and why it is that some persons become disciples of Jesus, and others do not. The reason simply is, that our hearts, by penitence, and faith, must be made willing to receive this Saviour, before He will enter in. Thus, the Divine Master says in the book of Revelation, iii. 20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

This man may have been a bad man, unjust in his dealings, and he does not entirely deny it; but Jesus saw, as his after conduct also proved, that there was a change in him. Now

I suppose if Christ had gone to stop with some of the showy, haughty Pharisees, nothing would have been said. But these poor, blinded people, not unlike many nowadays, did not know and see what Jesus knew and saw. He sees way down into the inmost recesses of the heart, and knows exactly what is in man. He saw and knew Peter's weakness in the matter of denying Him, and forewarned him of it.

Now we do not know that any others in the great crowd that thronged Christ that day in Jericho, received Him as their Saviour, with penitent and believing hearts, save this one man up in a tree. Why is it that now among the large number of children and grown people that hear of Jesus and see His wonderful works in the conversion of others, so few of either class really come to Him, or become in truth His disciples? The reason is that they love the things of this world too much, and are unwilling by repentance and faith to receive Christ as their

Saviour. Many persons, too, deceive themselves, and really think they are anxious and willing to come to Jesus, when they really are not. Alas! Alas! how our deceitful hearts can and do impose on us! You see, too, that it is not, by any means, such as we would regard the most amiable and moral, that come most readily to Christ. On the contrary, these people are blinded by their own supposed goodness and merit, so that they do not feel their need of this Saviour, and, according to his own declaration, "they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." You see, too, how many of the most wicked people have heard the call of Jesus and come to him. Such were John Bunyan, John Newton and John Williams, all of whom became eminent ministers of the Gospel. In the language of that old and beautiful Gospel hymn:

"All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him."

You see, too, the genuineness of this man's repentance. He said to Jesus, "Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation I restore him fourfold." The Saviour said, "This day is salvation come to this house." Now I hope, my young friends, that you will all be as anxious to hear of the wonder-working Jesus as was Zacchæus to see him; that you will listen earnestly to what your kind teachers have to tell you about this lovely, loving Saviour; that you will heed His calls to come unto Him, and seek to have your hearts made willing and opened by God's Spirit to receive this Saviour. If you are entirely willing and ready to receive Him, as this man was, He will be willing to enter and set up His kingdom there, and that will be the happiest day or hour of your life. The Lord help you to do so immediately. To-morrow may be too late.



CHAPTER XVI.

CHRIST ANOINTED BY MARY.—*Matthew xxvi. 6-13; John xii. 1-9.*

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Matthew xxvi. 10: "When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me."*

NO WONDER that Mary loved Jesus much, and sought to show her love and gratitude to him (see John xii. 3,) for what He had done for her. She could never forget the kindness of Jesus to her and her sister Martha in raising their beloved brother Lazarus from the dead and restoring him to them. It was a dark and tearful hour when Jesus came on that occasion to their home, and stood with them in loving sympathy at their brother's grave. But what a streaming of light there was from the darkened sky when Jesus, in tones of God

called him from his tomb. Oh, how the scene of the risen and restored brother must have thrilled her inmost soul! No change in time, place or circumstances could remove this from her mind. It was all owing to Jesus, and well she knew it, that their brother was raised from the dead and restored to them. Her gratitude and love to Christ was doubtless increased in after days, weeks and months, as she enjoyed, perhaps more than ever, the society and friendship of that brother. She doubtless sought an occasion to show her gratitude to the Saviour and now it presented itself. Jesus has come to Bethany, and is entertained by Simon, the leper. Lazarus is also an invited guest, and is sitting with Jesus at the table. Martha, as usual, understanding domestic affairs so well, serves the table in the house of their friend, as at her own home. This family, the brother and the two sisters, all intimate friends, we suppose, and Jesus were part at least of the guests on this

occasion. As they sat at meat Mary came unto Him, "having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head." John says on "the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair." Now we suppose it was poured both on the head and feet of Jesus; one Evangelist relating one part, and the other the other, and there is therefore no contradiction. It could be very easily poured upon the feet, as you will remember that they did not sit at the table as we do, but reclined on couches. This ointment was very valuable, and is supposed to have been Nard, and, having been a pound, cost, according to the account in our money, forty dollars.

Judas, especially, found great fault with Mary for having done this, and said, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" But the Evangelist John, adds, "This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a

thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." Jesus said, "Let her alone; against the day of my burying hath she kept this," and added, "for the poor always ye have with you; but Me ye have not always." Judas, the base-hearted fellow and traitor, wanted to show a very benevolent spirit, on this occasion, in his deep concern for the poor. He begrudged this kindness of Mary to her Divine Master. It is true, it was a great and costly act on the part of Mary, and it does not seem that she was poor, or she could scarcely have done it. Who will dare to say, however, that Jesus was not deserving, at the hands of Mary, of the greatest and most costly token of her gratitude. If she had only taken common ointment, or that which cost little, it would, by no means, have evinced, provided she could do better, her love and gratitude in the manner in which this did. She doubtless felt that nothing was too good or costly by which to show her love to Jesus.

Now, my young friends, the Lord Jesus, as you know, has done a most wonderful thing for us, and made a much more costly sacrifice for us, by giving His life, than Mary did for Him. How do we seek to show our gratitude to Him? Do we love Him supremely? No; unless our hearts have been changed by the power of His grace. What are we ready to do for Him? He did so much for us. Are we willing to yield ourselves, and what we have, and are, to His service? Do we feel for those as we should, who have never heard of this Saviour, and are we willing to give all that we can afford in assisting to extend His kingdom, and to bless the world with the light of His Gospel? Are we ready to acknowledge this Saviour, and work for Him as we have opportunity everywhere? Could we work forever for Him, and forever sing His praise, it would be but a poor return for what He has done so freely and lovingly for us. We may well ask, in the language of that beautiful hymn :

“Say shall we yield Him in costly devotion
Odors of Edom and off’rings divine,
Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest or gold from the mine?
Vainly we offer each humble oblation,
Vainly with gifts would His favor secure;
Richer by far is the heart’s adoration,
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.”





CHAPTER XVII.

CHRIST ENTERS JERUSALEM IN TRIUMPH. HE
CLEANSES THE TEMPLE, AND THE CHILDREN
CRY HOSANNA.—*Matthew xxi. 1-16 ;*
Mark xi. 1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Matthew xxi. 9 : “ And the multitudes that went before and that followed cried, saying Hosanna to the son of David ; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord ; Hosanna in the highest.”*

THIS was a strange scene in the life of Jesus. He had been styled by Isaiah “ a man of sorrows ” and few were the bright spots in His wonderful and eventful life. The Evangelist John tells us in a most touching manner that “ He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” It seemed as though it must not all be dark in the life of Jesus, but that there must be at least some few joyous occasions to relieve the general gloom. The scene

of the transfiguration in all its glorious character was one of these, and now, in His triumphant entry into the holy city, we have another. I do not know that we dare say much even about this as regards the feelings of the Saviour. I do not suppose that He shared in any considerable degree the joyous feelings of the multitude. He knew that much of this expression on the part of the people was not thoroughly sincere, and would not be lasting. He doubtless heard some crying "Hosanna" on this occasion who would shortly cry "crucify Him," and, therefore, if there had been nothing else to dampen the joy of Christ, this treachery would have been sufficient. But the time of His suffering in the garden and on the cross for the sin of the world, was rapidly approaching, and He saw that the storm that was to beat upon Him in all its fury for the sin of man was nigh at hand. Feelings of deep sadness no doubt entered His soul, as He knew

that His own people had and would continue to reject Him as their Saviour. His triumph seemed to be great, and, as you learn from this scripture, the people honored Him greatly on this occasion. It was all, too, of their own doing, and He knew that they were in no way compelled to act thus. The Saviour, as you will remember, was God as well as man, and as God He saw down into the hearts of the people, and He knew that much this doing was insincere.

Oh, how short-lived, uncertain, and unsatisfactory, is not the praise and honor of man. One day they cry "Hosanna," and, perhaps, the next day, "crucify Him." My young friends, I do not want to rob you of any innocent joy, or cast a gloom over your youthful spirits; but it is well and necessary that you should know, even now, that much in this world is unreal and deceitful, and cannot, therefore, be relied on. One has even gone so

far as to write : " There is nothing true, but heaven." This, strictly speaking, is not correct. Religion is true, and its joys lasting and sincere ; and Jesus is a true and faithful friend, one that " sticketh closer than a brother." There is such a thing, too, as having true Christian friends in this world, who will rejoice with us in joy, and sympathize with us in our sorrows, and as far as able relieve us. But, oh ! how much that passes for real in every respect, is not sincere or true. The selfishness of man is very great, and may lead him to do almost anything. I have heard of parents acting in an insincere and cruel manner towards their children ; and children, in return, acting in the same way towards their parents, it may be, when they were aged, or infirm, or reduced to poverty. You will be compelled to see and learn, and perhaps even experience, much of this in life, if you are spared to live long here. Your hearts, even though under the bright and

cheering influence of the love of Jesus, will sometimes turn away in sadness, and it may be, that you will be tempted to say, with one of ancient times: "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away, and be at rest." But be cheered by one thought, if you are a friend of Jesus, He will be a true and loving friend to you at all times, and under all circumstances; and should all earthly friends fail or forsake, Jesus will not.

The people, on this occasion, honored Jesus much, as stated. They put their clothes upon the animal on which He was to ride, and "spread their garments in the way." It would seem, further, that they could not well restrain their feelings, but cried out, saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." We are told, further, that "when He was come into Jerusalem, the whole city was moved, saying, "Who is this?"

Who would have thought that many of these people would so soon change their voices, and cry for His death. We are also informed, that after He had entered Jerusalem, He "went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves." This was also something to sadden the heart of Jesus already, and it shows the selfishness and wickedness of the people.

But this had a beautiful and bright offset to it, for the children, with sincere, simple and loving hearts, cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Now, although this action of these pious children displeased "the chief priests and scribes," Jesus was much pleased with their praises, for He knew that these, at least, were sincere, and said in their defence, "have ye never read, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, thou hast perfected praise?"

We suppose that Jesus prized the praises, artless praises; of these children, more than all the rest. You, my young friends, can, too, sing praise to Jesus, and we and others love to hear your clear and tender voices proclaiming the love of your Saviour, and remember, as taught in other chapters, you may early become His friends, and work for Him. Whilst there may be some wicked persons, who may laugh at you, and be ready to hinder you, remember, that if you are the friends of Jesus, He wants you to sing His praises, and acknowledge Him.







CHAPTER XVIII.

CHRIST INSTITUTES THE HOLY SUPPER, AND POINTS OUT JUDAS AS HIS BETRAYER.—*Matthew xxvi. 20-30 ;*

Luke xxii. 14-20; Mark xiv. 22-26.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Luke xxii. 19.*—"This do in remembrance of me."

WE COME now, my young friends, to some of the deeply interesting and touching closing scenes in the eventful life of Christ, our loving Redeemer. The Master Himself realizes that His life is rapidly approaching its close, and sees rising before Him in full view the bitter hours of suffering which He is to endure in the garden and on the cross for our salvation. He has an earnest desire to celebrate once more with His disciples the ancient feast of the Passover, instituted in commemoration of the destroying angel passing over the

houses of Israel in Egypt. The reason, as perhaps you may remember, why this death angel passed over or by the houses of ancient Israel on that terrible night of punishment, was because these houses, at the command of God, had been marked with blood. This marking with blood as a means of safety had doubtless reference to the blood of Jesus, "the Lamb of God," which was to be shed on Calvary, for the salvation of all who by faith accept Jesus as their Saviour. He told the disciples to go into Jerusalem, and say unto "such a man, the Master saith, My time is at hand: I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples," and the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them, and they made ready the passover.

Whilst they were eating together, Jesus suddenly cast a great gloom over the little company by making the startling declaration, "Verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."

Now whilst Judas had shown something of a wrong disposition on a former occasion, in reference to the anointing of Christ by Mary, yet I do not know that any of the other disciples considered him wicked enough for such a crime. When the astonished disciples began to inquire, "Lord, is it I?" the Saviour replies, "He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me." At last, Judas himself asks the question, "Master, is it I?" Jesus replied, "Thou hast said." Now there is no longer any mystery or uncertainty, and Judas, as the traitor, is clearly pointed out. Jesus then proceeds to institute the Holy Supper in anticipation of His sufferings in the garden, and on the cross. We are informed by Matthew, that "as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take eat: this is My body." And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and

gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." We have here, then, in few words, and without any previous ceremony, the institution of the Holy Supper by Jesus, as a solemn ordinance of His Church. Learned men have disputed much over the nature of this ordinance, and are, perhaps, no better agreed now than they were hundreds of years ago. It is not my intention to disturb your minds with anything that has been said on this subject. I think it would have been much better for the Church of Christ, if much less had been written and said on this difficult subject. Suffice it to state, my friends, that it is a solemn ordinance of the Christian Church, as established by Christ Himself, and as observed by the early Christians, as we may learn from 1 Cor. xi. 23-29. Our business is not with the precise nature of this ordinance, but with the

ordinance. It is, as you see, a Divine ordinance, instituted by Christ Himself under the most solemn circumstances, and is to be observed, as we learn elsewhere, by all the disciples of Jesus to the end of time. It is instituted and intended by Christ only for believers in Him, or for His disciples, that they, as our liturgical form expresses it very beautifully, "may be strengthened in their faith and attachment unto Him." It is not intended for the world, or careless people, only so far as in witnessing its solemn celebration by the disciples of Christ, they may be reminded of their need of this Saviour, and of their duty to serve Him. I scarcely ever witnessed its observance by my parents and acquaintances, when a boy, but that it made a most solemn impression on my heart. It spoke to my youthful heart silently, but powerfully of the dying love of Jesus, and always seemed to say: but you, as yet, are not among the number of His friends, and are neglecting

this salvation. It was designed to place before our minds and our eyes the love of God, the Father, and of the Lord Jesus, to perishing sinners. It was intended to keep this great truth, above all others, fresh in the minds of His people in all ages, and fresh in the minds of the world.

I, in company with many others, visited recently the tomb of General Washington, at Mt. Vernon, near Washington, D. C., the justly beloved and honored Father of our common country. As I stood before his tomb, and beheld with my own eyes the tomb in which repose his mortal remains, I realized, as perhaps I could not have done elsewhere, how much every American citizen owes to him for what he did for us. So, too, Jesus, knowing that His people, living in this sinful world, and surrounded from day to day by so many things calculated to withdraw their affections from Him, instituted this sacred ordinance to remind them of His dying love. He designed

too, that it should set before us the evil nature of sin, which caused Him to suffer so much for us, and by feeling that we have a common Saviour to unite the hearts of His friends in love and forbearance to each other. I hope, my young friends, that you will early seek by repentance of sin and faith in Jesus to become His disciples, and by professing Him before men, enter the Church, and seek to obey that commandment of Jesus, "this do in remembrance of Me." I have seen some very young persons surround the table of their Lord, and I trust they were sincere friends of Jesus. Remember, God's Word has a most beautiful promise for you in these encouraging words, "they that seek Me early, shall find Me." You will remember, too, however, that as I have stated, this ordinance is not for careless, wicked people, but for the followers of Christ; but none of the weakest and most humble should be deterred from its celebration, as it will strengthen them, and do them good.



CHAPTER XIX.

CHRIST'S AGONY IN THE GARDEN, AND HIS BETRAYAL
BY JUDAS.—*Matthew xxvi. 36-48; Luke xxii. 39-48; Mark*
xiv. 32-42; John xviii. 1-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Matthew xxvi. 39.*—"And He went a little farther and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

"Oh, Garden of Olives, thou dear honored spot,
The fame of thy wonders shall ne'er be forgot ;
The theme most transporting to seraphs above,
The triumph of sorrow—the triumph of love."

WE GO now with the blessed Saviour into the garden of sorrows, called Gethsemane. We see Him leaving Jerusalem, with its multitude of people and its bustle; and taking with Him the disciples, crosses the brook Cedron, and enters the garden of Olives. This garden, or grove, was a beautiful and retired

place, a short distance from Jerusalem, on the western side of Mount Olivet. It was laid out in shaded walks, with fountains, and was a desirable place of retirement from the bustle and noise of the city. We are informed by John that "Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples." Never had He gone into this garden with the same sorrowful feelings which now press upon Him. The fall of man took place in a garden, and now human redemption by Christ must begin in a garden too.

The severe conflict with the powers of darkness, it would seem, began as soon as He entered the place, and, therefore, we read that He said unto the disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." He thus separated himself from the disciples, as we are told, taking only Peter, James and John with Him. The sorrow of a world's sin and a sense of God's wrath against it press now so heavily upon Jesus that He finds it desirable to be entirely

alone, and it is therefore said, "and He went a little farther and fell on His face and prayed, O, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." There may have been two reasons why Christ in His agony and earnest praying withdrew from even His most beloved disciples. First, we suppose He desired to be entirely alone with God, His Father. Secondly, He may have known that His intense agony would overpower His disciples. You remember He would go away and pray, and then return only to find them sleeping. Thus he did three times. It would seem to have been very ungrateful and unbecoming for these disciples to act as they did. The Saviour says in language of reproof, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." But He afterward, in His tender compassion for their weakness, adds in the way of excuse for them, "the spirit indeed

is willing, but the flesh is weak." Oh, what a loving Saviour we have ; why should any stay away from Him ?

It was not a fear of death that thus troubled Christ, and led Him to pray and act as He did, for many martyrs have shown greater strength by going forth joyfully to the stake. It was the sin of the world pressing upon Him, and the powers of darkness opposing His work. O, think how deep were the sorrows of Jesus in the garden for our sins. Denied even the sympathy of His most intimate friends ; surely, as the prophet had said for Jesus, " I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people, there was none with me." It seems generally a great relief to have a few tried friends with us in our hours of suffering. Their words of sympathy come oftentimes like a healing balm to our wounded spirits, but of even this source of consolation Christ is deprived. They not only do not speak words

of comfort, but show so great a want of concern, as even to sleep in the midst of the Saviour's most severe agony. We see from this part of the sorrow of Christ, how much human redemption cost. Ah! we can never estimate the keen anguish endured by Jesus for us under the trees of Olivet. We see, too, His intense love to His disciples, even seeking to excuse the indifference which they manifested towards Him in this trying hour. We see, too, our refuge of safety in every time of trial, and amid all the sorrows of life; it is prayer. Oh, how much evil, shame and sin would be avoided, did all the disciples of Christ, when sin and Satan come upon them, wrestle in prayer to God for deliverance, as Jesus did. The darker, therefore, our time of trial is, the more earnestly and perseveringly should we be engaged in prayer.

Even grown persons sometimes think they cannot pray, but it is a great mistake. Prayer

is only crying to God for help, as a child would call upon his parent, or as one friend would entreat another friend for help.

You must remember, my young friends, that you cannot serve God, overcome temptation, and reach heaven without prayer, much prayer. It is utterly impossible.

A very keen part of the Saviour's suffering in the garden remains to be noticed, and that His betrayal by Judas Iscariot, one of His professed friends, into the hands of His enemies. He said to His disciples, for He knew all things, "Rise, let us be going; behold he is at hand that doth betray Me. And while He yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him, a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; hold Him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master;

and kissed Him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come." Here, you see, we have the crowning point to the Saviour's agony in the garden. Not only must He endure the unconcern of some of His disciples, but now, one of the twelve, named Judas, as you see, betrays his Master into the hands of His enemies with a kiss. Oh, the malignant baseness and wickedness of the man; no wonder we hate the very name. Judas knew the place, for he had often been there in company with Jesus and His other disciples. The multitude would not have been able to distinguish Jesus from the other disciples, and, therefore, Judas, the vile traitor, had bargained to point Him out, as he did, by giving the sweetest sign of friendship. We see, from this last part of the Saviour's sorrow, that although we may have true friends, who never would act in so base a way towards us as Judas did to Christ, still we should not rely

too much upon human friendship, as it is, at best, but a frail dependence, and may be suddenly, even if entirely true, taken away from us. Jesus is a friend who always lives and can help us. Oh, that in every dark and trying hour, we may cling closely to Him. May we follow, also, the example of our Divine Master, in every hour of darkness and temptation, in seeking, by earnest prayer, strength to bear, or grace to overcome the evil by which we may be surrounded.





CHAPTER XX.

THE TRIAL OF JESUS AND HIS DENIAL BY PETER,
AND THE REPENTANCE OF JUDAS.—*Matthew*

xxvi. 57-75; xxvii. 1-26; *Mark* xiv. 55-72; xv.

1-15; *Luke* xxii. 54-71; xxiii. 1-23;

John xviii. 13-40; xix. 1-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*John* xix. 4: “Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him.”

THE trial of Jesus was of a two-fold character. First, before the Spiritual Court of the Jews, and secondly, before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. After Christ had been betrayed by Judas into the hands of His enemies, He was led by them to the Spiritual Court of the Jews. He was taken, first before Annas, who had been high priest, and had, doubtless, very considerable influence; more, perhaps, to obtain his sanction to their conduct, than for any other consideration. Thence

He was taken to Caiaphas, son-in-law of Annas, and then acting high priest. "The chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witnesses against Jesus to put Him to death; but found none." At last, we are informed, that two such witnesses came forth, who testified to something that the Saviour had said in reference to the destruction of the temple, and His building it again. But even these did not so agree as to make out a case. Whereupon the high priest became very much excited, and exhorted the Lord Jesus to testify as to whether he was the Son of God, or not. Jesus answered, "Thou hast said," which was equivalent to an affirmation. "Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy, what further need have we of witnesses; behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy, What think ye? They answered, He is guilty of death." Upon this, they offered several very severe indignities to

our blessed Lord, spitting upon Him, and smiting on His face with the palms of their hands. Now, whilst all this was going on, Peter sat without in the palace, and there came unto him a young woman, saying, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee." But he denied before them all, saying, "I know not what thou sayest." Now when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And, again, he denied with an oath, I know not this man." "After a while came unto him they that stood by, and said unto Peter, surely, thou also art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and swear, saying, I know not the man." He had, now, according to what Jesus had told him in the midst of his boasted attachment, denied Him thrice in the most shameful manner, and it now only remains for the cock to announce his denial, and we are informed,

“immediately the cock crew.” And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. “And he went out, and wept bitterly.” You will recollect that there was another circumstance which led to Peter’s repentance, and that was a look which Jesus gave him. The Master said not a word, but merely turned and looked upon him. This look was, doubtless, such an one as Jesus alone could give, so expressive of tenderness and sympathy, whilst recalling his sin: so mingled with the deep regret and sorrow, as immediately to unseal the fountain of Peter’s feelings, and melt him down, and cause the most sincere repentance to fill his soul. You will remember, as aggravating Peter’s fall, how he had been with the Saviour on the mount of transfiguration, and when He raised the dead, and enjoyed so many advantages. You will remember, too, how earnest had been his

declarations of love to Jesus only a short time before, and how he had said though all should forsake Christ, yet would not he. Two causes chiefly, we suppose, led to this sad fall on the part of Peter. First, we are informed that he followed Christ, like too many of the present day, "afar off;" and secondly, he had gone in among the enemies of the Lord, when the trial of Jesus was going on. Had he remembered that part of the Lord's prayer, which asks, "lead us not into temptation," and had he withdrawn to secret prayer, as Jesus did in His hour of temptation in the garden, how different it might have been with him. You will also remember, my young friends, that after his repentance, which was most deep and sincere, he became very bold in the service of his Master, and stood upon the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, and preached Christ, in His death and resurrection, in such a powerful manner as to lead to the conviction and

conversion of three thousand persons. It is also related that Peter, in remembrance of his crime in so basely denying his Lord, desired, and was crucified with his head downwards to the earth.

The fall of Peter teaches us the great, solemn and very important lesson which we should never forget, that when left to ourselves we are very weak creatures, and liable to sin greatly against God. I never hear persons speak of their strength and attainments in the Divine life, but I think of Peter's sad fall, and of that Scripture which saith, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." We have at the close of the trial of Jesus before the Spiritual Court of the Jews to see another most wonderful and exciting occurrence. The trial of Christ, you must recollect, was going on through the silent hours of the night, whilst some were quietly sleeping in their peaceful homes. It is supposed to have been

about three o'clock in the morning when Peter denied his Master. Now that the morning has come, "all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death." They most probably would have proceeded to execute their sentence had it not been that they feared the people, and thought that to avoid all trouble on their part and make a better show of justice, it would be wiser to have the sentence of the Roman Governor. Now at this stage of their doings a most wonderful and exciting thing occurred, and one which should certainly have checked their conscience, and have caused them to stop from going any further. When Judas, the betrayer of Jesus, saw that He was condemned by them, and that He was bound, his conscience smote him, and it is said he "repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

He may have thought up to this time that Jesus would work a miracle for His own deliverance, but now, if he had, he gives up all hope. He receives very cold comfort from the enemies of Christ, for "they said ; What is that to us? see thou to that." The only thing which seemed to give them any trouble was as to what they should do with this money of Judas. They thought that as it was "the price of blood" it could not go into the Lord's treasury, and, after some consultation, they determined to buy "the potter's field to bury strangers in." Judas, the infamous traitor, went out in the meantime, and hanged himself. His repentance was unlike that of Peter ; it did not bring him to the feet of Jesus, but led him to the commission of the terrible crime of taking his own life. Oh ! how dark and dreadful the course and end of this miserable man ! It is said of him, in the Acts of the Apostles, " And falling headlong, he burst asunder in midst,

and all his bowels gushed out." Dr. Lyman Beecher explained this apparent difficulty in the account of the death of Judas to an infidel, in three words: "The rope broke."

We come now to the trial of Jesus before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. Pilate seems in the very outset to have been thoroughly convinced of the entire innocence of Jesus, and evidently did not want to have anything to do either with his trial or condemnation. When he heard that Jesus was a Galilean, he sent Him to Herod, as being more properly under his rule; but Herod, who did not, perhaps, care to be troubled with the case, returned Him to Pilate. There was a circumstance which made Pilate the more afraid. His own "wife sent unto him, saying, have thou nothing to do with that just person, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream, because of Him." He also having found, as he expressed himself, no cause for condemna-

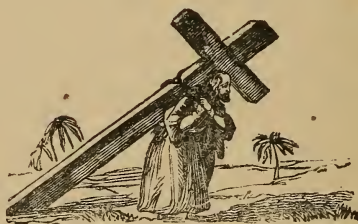
tion in Christ, made a very ingenious and well-timed effort to secure His release. It was customary, at the feast, to release some prisoner. They held, at that time, a notable prisoner named Barabbas. Pilate, having an earnest desire to free Jesus, and scarcely supposing that they would ask for the release of so vile a person as Barabbas, "said unto them, whom will ye that I release unto you, Barabbas, or Jesus, which is called Christ?" The multitude, to his surprise and sorrow, asked for Barabbas. "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it. Then released he Barabbas unto them, and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified." Now whilst Pilate did wickedly in not acting out his convictions, and refusing to condemn Jesus, yet we think

the malicious chief priests and elders, who delivered Jesus to Pilate, acted still more wickedly, for they had more light, and should have known better. We should add, in regard to this conduct of Pilate, those lines of that beautiful Sabbath-school hymn, which we should seek ever to follow :

“ Dare to do right,
Dare to be true ;
God and your conscience
Will carry you through.”

See, too, how differently Mordecai of old acted, in refusing to do homage to wicked Haman, and thus, by his decision, saved the Jewish nation. See, too, how differently the immortal Luther acted, when surrounded by danger, and threatened with death. True courage, and the fear of God caused him ever to stand out firmly for what he believed to be true and right. The Lord help you, my young friends, to stand up boldly for Jesus, and to

seek ever, as far as possible, to defend injured innocence. Oh, how much such people, men, women, and children, are needed at this day in the Church, and in the world! Oh, that you may early learn and feel, too, how much your blessed Saviour endured for you, and be early led to love and serve Him who has loved us so much, and suffered so much unjustly for us. If you should, in any way, be persecuted for Him, remember the thorny path 'He trod for you.





CHAPTER XXI.

THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST.—*Matthew* xxvii. 27-6c ;

Mark xv. 16-47 ; *Luke* xxiii. 26-53 ; *John* xix. 16-41.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Luke* xxiii. 48 : “ *And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts and returned.*”

AFTER that Pilate had gone through with the mock trial of Jesus, of which we have read, had washed his hands in token of his innocence, and delivered Jesus, to be crucified, it seems that then the soldiers thought they were at liberty to insult Him in almost every way, and accordingly their indignities immediately began. “ They stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had plaited Him a crown of thorns they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand : and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And

they spit upon Him, and took the reed and smote Him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and they led Him away to crucify Him." Jesus being much worried and exhausted from the long-continued excitement, and fearing, perhaps, that he might faint by the way, and that possibly they might not have the pleasure of crucifying Him, they compelled Simon of Cyrene to bear the cross of Jesus.

There followed Him a great company of people and of women, lamenting and bewailing Him. Jesus, turning unto them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children." We must not think that Jesus had no friends. There were many who from His kind miracles and wonderful teachings were tenderly attached to Him. Jerusalem, the holy city, must have been in a state of great excitement at this time,

and, as they led Him away from the hall of judgment, and out of one of the gates of the city, quite a company followed Him. They led Him to a place called Golgotha, which was a little hill north of ancient Jerusalem, and about a half-mile distant from the temple. The place received this name, which means *the place of a skull*, "either from its shape, or from the circumstance that it was the usual place for executing criminals." It is now known to us as Mount Calvary, a name precious to every Christian.

Jesus having requested a drink, they gave Him vinegar "mingled with gall, and when he had tasted thereof he would not drink." They also parted His garments, casting lots. One piece of His raiment was woven together without seam, and they therefore fulfilled that Scripture which said, "they parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots." "And sitting down they

watched Him there." Pilate had ordered that the following writing, in three languages, viz.—Hebrew, Latin and Greek—so that all might read, should be placed "over His head."

"This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

You may remember, too, that some persons wanted Pilate to change this writing, and have it written, not "king of the Jews," but that "He said, I am the King of the Jews." Pilate, however, gave a very decided answer to this request and said, "what I have written I have written." As much as to say, I cannot and will not change it, and I believe it to be true. Now had this man showed anything like the same firmness in the matter of the trial of Jesus, he never would have condemned Him, or given his consent to His crucifixion. "They that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the

cross." In order to make the death of Jesus more shameful, He was crucified between two thieves, one of whom also taunted Him in His dying hour.

Crucifixion, you know, was regarded among the Romans as the basest and most shameful death, deserved only by traitors. It was, also, a lingering and most painful death. Sometimes their protracted sufferings were ended by setting fire to the foot of the cross, or by breaking the limbs with a hammer, or, at other times, by piercing the body with a lance. The agonies suffered by this mode of death were of a very extreme kind. About the ninth hour, we are informed, Jesus cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." You remember, too, how very differently the two thieves acted; just as nowadays, there is often a great difference in members even of the same family. The one reviled Jesus, and said insultingly, "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us.' But the other,

answering, rebuked him, saying, "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss." He then showed still further and most clearly the genuineness of his repentance, when, turning his languid eye, perhaps becoming glassy in death, to Jesus, he prayed, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." The soul-cheering, encouraging and, I suppose, unexpected answer which this poor man received was, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Thus, you see, the very arrangement which the enemies of our Lord had made to increase the shameful character of His death is made to shine with greatest splendor, through all ages of the world. Oh, how the conferring of salvation on this penitent man has exalted Christ and the Gospel, and has brought to the mind of many a poor, despairing sinner the

glorious truth, "He is able to save unto the uttermost!" He also prayed most beautifully for His enemies: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

There was darkness over the earth, for the sun refused to shine upon such terrible wickedness, and mourned in token of the death of the Son of God. No wonder thou didst hide thy face in darkness, O glorious light of the world! The earth also did quake, and the rocks were rent. "The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves, after His resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many." Oh, how terrible must have been the scene, and what feelings of alarm must have seized the minds of His enemies! How their consciences, if not utterly hardened, must have upbraided and tormented them! How must wicked Pilate

have felt at this time! No wonder that the centurion, who was standing by, and witnessed these terrific scenes, exclaimed, "Truly, this was the Son of God." No wonder, either, that we read, "And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned."

When in the evening they examined the bodies to see if they were dead, and if they were not, to hasten their death by breaking the bones, and came to Jesus, they brake none of His bones, for they found that He was already dead, and thus the Scripture was fulfilled again, "a bone of Him shall not be broken." One of the soldiers, however, in order to be certain that Jesus was dead, "with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." Joseph, of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the

body, he wrapped it in clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out of the rock, and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

What a solemn night that must have been both for the friends and the enemies of Jesus, when His body, cold and lifeless, reposed in this new tomb of Joseph! . What a cloud of darkness and gloom must have hung over Jerusalem! We love the bodies of our friends even in death, and it was a great kindness on the part of Joseph to do as he did, in going to Pilate at that trying time, and begging the dead body of our Lord, and in kindly caring for it as he did. Methinks we all owe him a debt of gratitude for what he did for our crucified Lord. This has always seemed to me a bright spot in the naturally dark colors of this tragic picture.

Now, my young friends, as your hearts are softened in reading what Jesus endured for us

all, in the garden and on the cross, may you all feel that it is alone "by His stripes" that we poor, sinful creatures can be "healed;" that it was to save us that Jesus endured all this shame and agony, and that if we could have been saved in any other way, Christ would not have undergone for us what he did; that it is alone by faith in Jesus, as our personal Redeemer, that we can be saved. Oh, that you might come now, in the morning of your days, and by true repentance and faith in this Saviour, dedicate yourselves to His service for all time and all eternity, saying in the language of that sweet hymn :

" Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small ;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."



CHAPTER XXII.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.—*Matthew xxviii.*; *Mark xvi.*; *Luke xxiv.*; *John xx.*

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Luke xxiv. 6.*—"He is not here, but is risen."

"Ye mourning saints, dry ev'ry tear
For your departed Lord :
Behold the place ; He is not here,
The tomb is all unbarred :
The gates of death were closed in vain ;
The Lord is risen. He lives again."

THE time passed between the death of Jesus and His resurrection was a dark and sorrowful time for His disciples. It is trying under any circumstances to see a dear friend suddenly cut down by death, and removed from us. How much more sad it is to be compelled to see one die in such a cruel manner as Jesus

did. Christ, as you may remember, like a kind friend, seeing the dark scene of His death approaching, sought to prepare the minds of His disciples for it. He had also clearly foretold that He would rise again, but when the distressed disciples saw Him condemned, and die as He did, they seemed to have been overcome with fear and unbelief. These disciples, my young friends, were slow learners in the school of Christ, and when, after you have been going to Sabbath-school for some time, you find that there is much that you do not fully understand you must not be discouraged. So, too, in your after Christian life; if still you find unbelief, as you will, in your hearts, do not be discouraged on this account, as it was so with the disciples of old. I think they fell very far below the measure of their privileges, and yet, perhaps, if we had been in their place, we might not have done any better. They loved Jesus, and, therefore, when He spoke to them about His cruel

sufferings and death, they did not want to hear. You remember that Peter told Him, when He was speaking in this way, "far be it from Thee." It would be hard for you or for me to place ourselves in the situation of those friends of Jesus. They remind preachers very much of many people who are members of the Church at this time. They hear the doctrines and duties of religion explained, as the preachers think, clearly, and yet, when we talk to them, they seem to know so little, and to do still even less, than they know.

You may remember in what a sad condition Jesus found those two disciples who were journeying towards Emmaus, and with whom He conversed after His resurrection; that after talking with them for some time, and hearing their doleful account of things, Jesus began to reprove them, and said not very softly, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suf-

fered these things, and to enter into His glory ? And, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures concerning Himself."

You may remember, too, how the sepulchre, at the request of the chief priests and Pharisees, had been secured ; for they said unto Pilate, " Sir, we remember that the deceiver said while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again ; command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead ; so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch : go your way and make it as sure as ye can. So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch."

You may remember, too, how the chief priests, after they had heard reports in regard to the resurrection of Christ, through the watch,

bribed the soldiers by paying them money to say, "His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we slept." We see how vain are all the efforts of Satan, and of wicked men, to overcome the truth, and to prevent the designs of God. Early on the morning of the third day Jesus, the Lord, had triumphed over death and the grave. For when the women—some of whom had been at the sepulchre after the body of Christ had been placed in it—came at an early hour to anoint, or perhaps to finish the work of anointing the body of Jesus with spices, He had already arisen. It was love which led them to seek to do this last act of kindness to the body of their crucified Lord. You may remember, too, how the women feared that they might not be able to enter the sepulchre after they had reached it, and had asked the question in reference to the great stone which some of them had seen rolled to its door, "who shall roll us away the stone from the door of

the sepulchre?" But there had been, as we are informed, "a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it." This angel is described as having a countenance "like lightning," and raiment "white as snow." It is further stated, also, that "for fear of him the keepers did shake and became as dead men." Now it is supposed that it was during this scene, and whilst the keepers were unconscious, early in the morning, that Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, arose from the dead—deliberately laid aside the grave clothes, as they were afterwards found lying, and left the sepulchre. When, therefore, the women came to perform their kind office, they found the stone rolled away, but they saw not the body of Jesus. Mary, almost overcome by her feelings, having passed through such exciting scenes, hastened away to tell the disciples of what had taken place. Upon hearing this, Peter

and John hastened off to the sepulchre and found things as they had been informed. It would seem from the narrative that after Mary was gone, the other women may have looked around the garden searching for the body, and determined to go into the sepulchre and examine carefully. They entered it, and found an angel, who informed them that Christ had arisen, and requested them to go and inform Peter and the disciples. It would seem that these women, in seeking to obey the command of the angel, and make known the cheering tidings of a risen Saviour, did not meet Mary Magdalene, John and Peter, who had, it would appear, taken another road, perhaps a nearer route, in their great haste and anxiety to reach the sepulchre. John, being the younger and the more active, outran Peter and reached the sepulchre first, and, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying : yet went he not in. When Peter came, however, being more

impulsive, he "went into the sepulchre and seeth the linen lie, and the napkin that was about His head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself." Then came also John, "and he saw and believed." That is, was satisfied at any rate that the body was gone. He saw, too, that nothing seemed to have been done in haste, for "the napkin was wrapped together in a place by itself." John adds: "For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." After these disciples had left the sepulchre and returned home, Mary, in her great attachment, having returned, still lingered there, and was weeping; when, you remember, Jesus asked why she wept. She supposing Him to be the gardener said: "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." She also said unto Him, "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I

will take Him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself and saith unto Him Rabboni; which is to say Master." You will remember, too, how that afterwards, He appeared unto others at different places and under different circumstances; to the other women, to Peter, to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, to the apostles when Thomas was absent, and then again when Thomas was present; and, in compassion to his weakness and unbelief, you will recollect how Jesus said to him, "Reach hither thy finger and behold My hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless but believing;" how Thomas, too, after this experience, exclaimed, "My Lord and my God." He also appeared in Galilee to a number of disciples at the sea of Tiberias; also to the disciples as appointed in a mountain in Galilee; also to the eleven as they sat at meat, "and upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart;" also

as Paul informs us, to "five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present time, but some have fallen asleep." The Saviour remained on the earth forty days after His resurrection, conversing in a familiar manner with His disciples, and then, you know, ascended to Heaven in their presence from the Mount of Olives. I have always regarded it as one of the strongest, if not the strongest, argument for the resurrection of Christ, that the timid Peter preached this doctrine in a most fearless manner, on the day of Pentecost, shortly after the Saviour's ascension, in the city of Jerusalem, near which Jesus had been crucified, and where the people knew all about it; and his preaching resulted in the conversion of three thousand souls. Among this number may have been some of our Lord's murderers.

Now, the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ is about as important and as essential to Christianity as His sufferings and death for

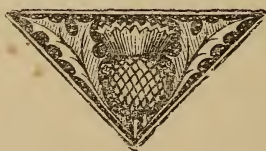
our redemption. Paul viewed it in this light, for he says, "If Christ be not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain and your faith also is vain." If Jesus had not arisen, His own declaration in regard to this matter would have proved false, and all His claims to being the Son of God and Saviour of the world would have been overthrown. Now, however, we have a sure foundation on which to build. It is stated that Lord Lyttleton and his friend, Gilbert West, esq., both men of talent, had imbibed principles of infidelity. They sought to overthrow Christianity. Lord Lyttleton, it is said, chose for his subject the conversion of Paul, and Mr. West the resurrection of Christ. But instead of overthrowing Christianity, they were overthrown in their infidelity, and have furnished two able works on these subjects in defense of Christianity.

The doctrine of the resurrection of Christ has in it the idea of victory over death and the

grave for all His people, and they can and should be able to say, in the language of David, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." This doctrine is a most comforting one, too, to Christians, both as regards their own resurrection and that of their pious departed friends. It is true that all will be raised up, both the righteous and the wicked, but the mere fact of the ungodly being raised from the grave has in it nothing consolatory, for their bodies and souls shall be forever banished from the presence of God into the world of woe. Of the righteous, however, it is said that they come forth "to the resurrection of life," and shall have spiritual bodies, "fashioned like unto the glorious body" of Christ Himself. Why, therefore, should not Christians view death with composure, both in reference to themselves and pious friends. They should be

enabled to say in reference to themselves, in the language of that beautiful hymn, "Since Jesus hath lain there I dread not its gloom;" and in reference to friends who have died in the Lord, "Even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him." Oh, with what cheering power have not those beautiful words of Christ fallen on our ears, and into our hearts as we surrounded the open grave of some loved one. "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth shall never die." Christianity, my young friends, is the only religion that sheds light around the tomb, and can fortify us against the terrors of death. O, how earnestly we should seek to become Christians. We should not think of putting this great and all-important matter off unto riper years or a sick bed. How much, too, we should feel concerned, if we are Christians ourselves, for those of our

dear friends who are living without God and without hope in the world. How very earnestly too, should we not desire to see all the heathen nations of the world, who are sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, both as regards themselves and their friends, have the blessed gospel of Jesus with all its comforting power? They are beginning to call loudly for the word of life. Oh, may we all seek to send it to them!





CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.—*Luke xxiv. 50-53 ; Acts of the Apostles i. 9-11.*

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Acts i. 11 : " This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."*

" Lord, though parted from our sight,
Far above the starry height,
Grant our hearts may thither rise,
Seeking Thee above the skies."

WE come now to the time when Jesus, having finished His glorious and self-denying work on earth, returns to heaven. We have followed Him through many interesting scenes in His eventful life. I say many, for had we considered all which the Evangelists have given us, it would make, as you know, a much larger book than this was ever intended to be.

We have seen Him coming into our world as the little helpless babe of Bethlehem ; have seen Him afterwards in the temple with the learned doctors, hearing and asking them questions ; we have seen Him led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and have seen how Jesus triumphed and Satan was disappointed ; we have seen Him on the mount instructing the people, and speaking as never man spake ; we have seen Him cleansing the leper and healing the sick ; we have considered the interesting miracle of the loaves and fishes ; we have noticed His conversations with Nicodemus and the poor ignorant woman of Samaria at Jacob's well ; and have seen both the patience and earnest zeal of Christ in His work ; we have seen Him opening the eyes of the blind and causing the dumb to speak ; we have seen Him in answer to the earnest cries of His distressed disciples, calming the raging sea and causing the angry winds to cease ; we

have seen Him calling Zacchæus down from the tree to His service ; have seen Him blessing little children, and have considered the beautiful words of encouragement which were uttered for all children on that occasion : we have gone with Him and the distressed sisters Mary and Martha to the tomb of their brother Lazarus, and have seen how at the voice of Jesus he left the tomb and came forth ; we have seen Him in the glorious scene of transformation ; we have considered the gratitude of Mary in kindly anointing the body of Jesus at great cost ; we have seen Him entering the Holy City, Jerusalem, in triumph, instituting as one of the last and most solemn acts of His life, the Holy Supper, to be observed by all Christians through all time ; we have considered His great agony in the garden, and His base betrayal by Judas, one of the twelve ; we have noticed His trial before the Jewish council, and at the court of Pontius Pilate ; and

have seen the testimony of both Pilate and Judas to His innocency ; we have had brought before us His painful and shameful death on the cross for our salvation ; seen His patience and forgiving spirit in that trying time, and listened, as it were, to that beautiful prayer for His cruel murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ;" and answering the prayer of the penitent thief, by saying, "to-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise ;" we have noticed His triumphant resurrection from the dead, on the morning of the third day ; we now come to the last scene in the Saviour's wondrous life as stated, viz: His triumphant ascension to heaven.

Oh, how different was the life of the Saviour on earth to that which He had for ages enjoyed in heaven ! His whole life here was one of labor, self-denial, persecution and suffering ; and all endured for us, my young friends, to bring us back to God our heavenly Father,

and so save our never-dying souls. We can never fully understand in this world what Jesus the loving Saviour did for us to make us happy through eternity. There are some very ungrateful persons in the world who do not appreciate any kindness done for them; but I suppose that these are few when compared with the many who do. Now, should we not seek to love that kind Redeemer who has done all this for us.

But we now notice His return to heaven. Having remained on earth forty days after His glorious resurrection, instructing his disciples in "the things pertaining to His kingdom," He takes them out with Him on a certain day to a town called Bethany, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, and is there separated from them and received up into heaven. The account given us in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, says: "And when He had spoken these things, while they yet beheld, He

was taken up: and a cloud received Him out of their sight." I suppose that this, as other things in the life of Jesus, was quite a surprise to them. They may have been calculating, as we are inclined to do as regards our dear friends, on enjoying His society and kind instructions for a long time, but it was ordered otherwise. I do not wonder either that they, as they loved Jesus so much and He loved them so tenderly, should stand and look up after Him, desiring to see Him as long as they could catch one glimpse. I do not think that the angels who addressed them on this occasion, could fully sympathize with them, for they said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" The only consolation which the angels offered was that He would come again in like manner. Oh, how eagerly we look after a dear one who is leaving us for a time, even if we may have some reason to hope that he will return. We watch the vessel

or car or carriage as long as we can see anything of it, and it is only when it is entirely out of sight that we are willing to leave the place and return homeward. This must have been a most thrilling sight to the greatly astonished disciples. Perhaps, Jesus, in His conversation, may have given them some little idea about His speedy return to heaven, so as to lessen their surprise. I do not know. If you have never seen a person make a balloon ascension, you should seek to see one, for it is a grand sight, and is calculated to give us some faint idea of the Saviour's glorious ascension to heaven. In this leaving of our world, where the blessed Saviour had seen so much evil and suffered so much for us, He bade farewell to the dark scenes of earth. True, as the angels informed the disciples, He will in like manner come again; but not to suffer, or to labor, or to die, or to be despised by men. He will come, as He himself informs us, "in power and

great glory, and all the holy angels with Him," and, as John tells us, "every eye shall see Him."

It was necessary that Jesus our Saviour should thus return to heaven, that he might prepare a place for His people, send the Holy Spirit into the world, and there ever live at the Father's right hand to intercede for us. Oh, that our thoughts and wishes might often rise to the place where Christ now lives and reigns! Oh, that in every dark hour of temptation and sorrow, we may feel that we have, if disciples of Christ, a true friend in heaven earnestly pleading for us!

How different will be the second coming of Christ to His first appearance as the helpless babe of Bethlehem. Then He came to save, but at His second appearing he comes to judge the world in righteousness. Then His coming was proclaimed by the angel to be glad tidings, but at His second appearing it will be sad tid-

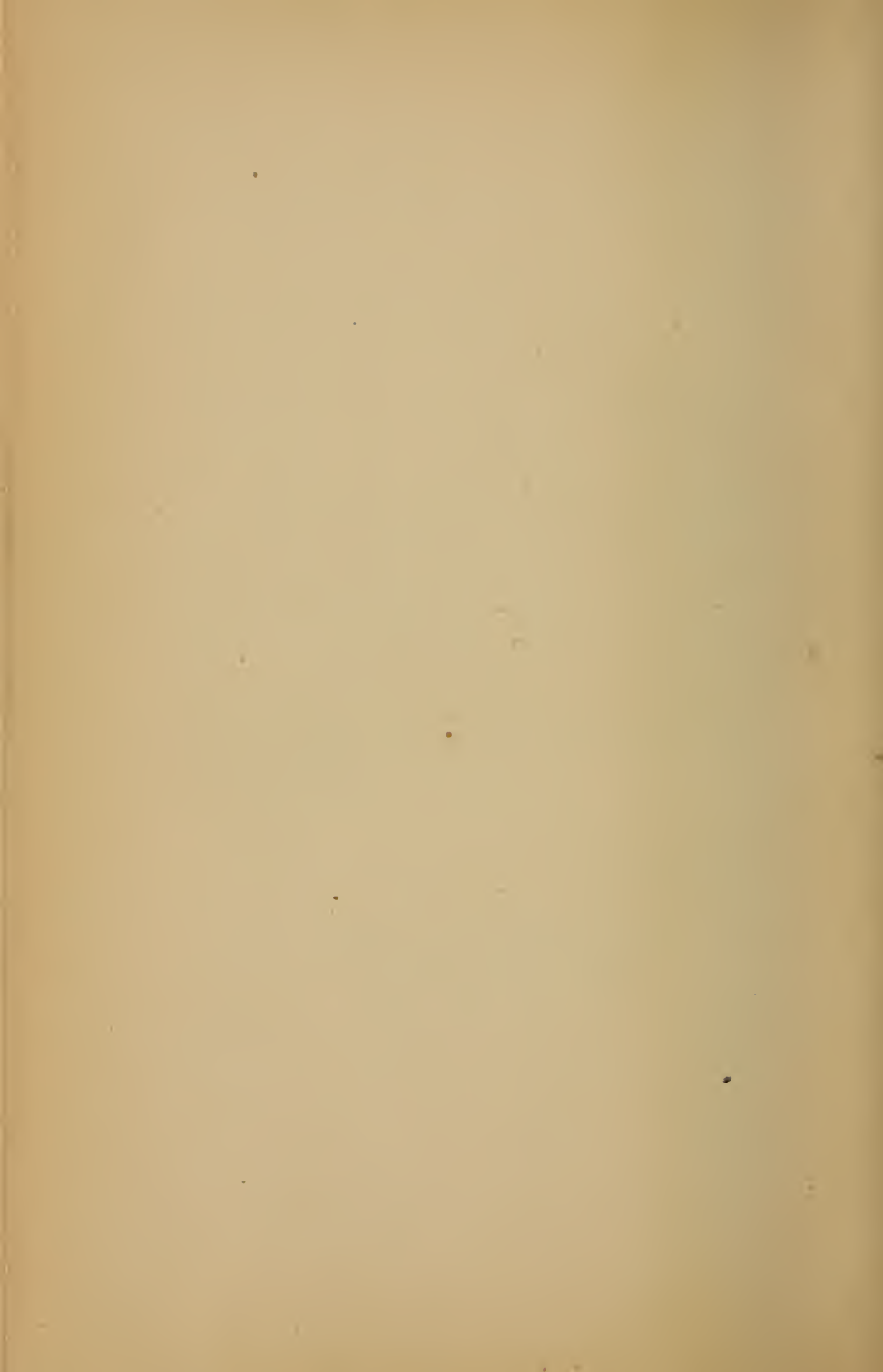
ings to all His foes. The Saviour may and will come suddenly, and—at least to careless sinners, who are not looking for, and are perhaps saying in unbelief, where is the promise of His coming?—unexpectedly. Paul, in addressing his fellow Christians on this subject, says, you remember, “but ye brethren are not in the dark that that day should overtake you as a thief in the night.”

The second coming of Jesus should have in it nothing terrible to His friends, for it is said that He shall come “to be admired in all them that believe;” and the Saviour, when speaking of the closing scenes of earth and His second coming, told His disciples that when they should see those things, then should they “lift up their heads,” inasmuch as their redemption was drawing near.

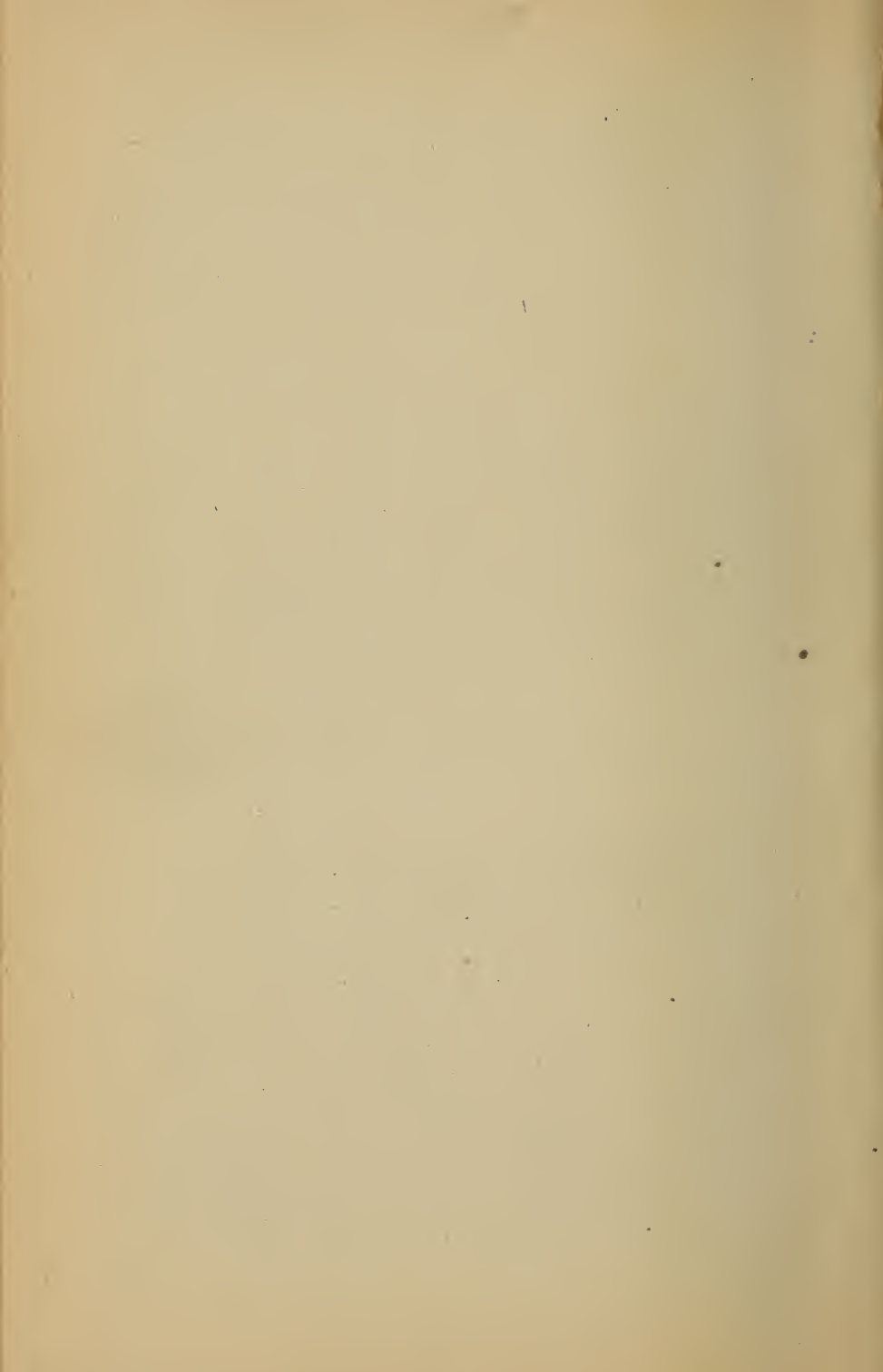
Now, my young friends, if I have succeeded in this little book in causing any of you to see more clearly the loveliness that there is in

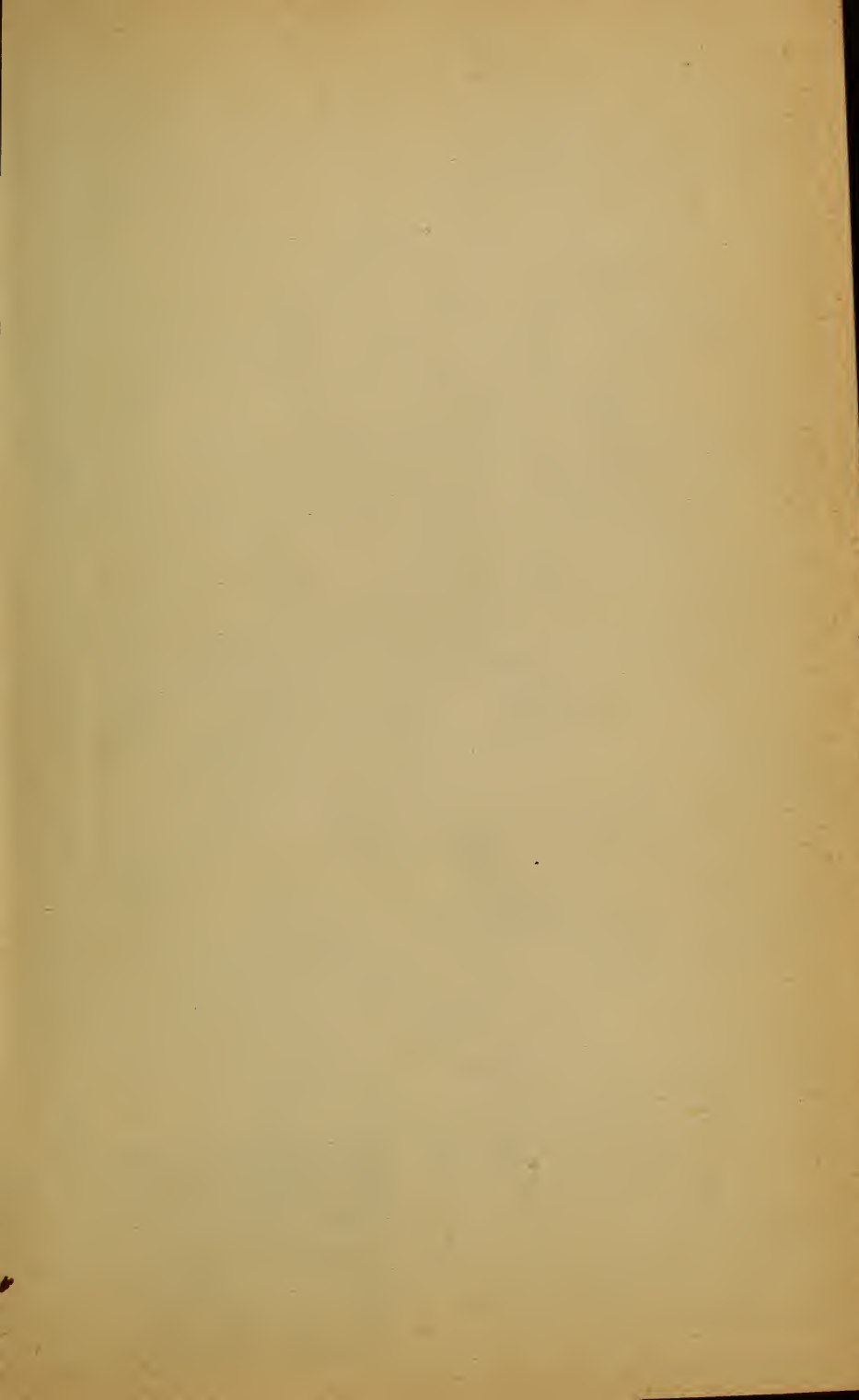
Christ, and in leading you to feel it to be your duty, as well as privilege, to yield yourselves up to the service of such a master in the morning of your days, I should feel that I had done much, and be amply compensated for the labor it has cost me in preparing it for you. O, Thou ascended and glorified Redeemer, who didst come to labor, teach and to die for us, and without whom we can do nothing, add Thy blessing, and draw the hearts of the young and also of the older ones who may read this book unto Thyself, and Thine shall be the praise of their salvation. Amen.











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